ISSN 0898-0209

Renegade Press PRESENTS

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2.00 IN U.S.
2.75 CANADA

Cases Of Sherlock Holmes

BY
SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE
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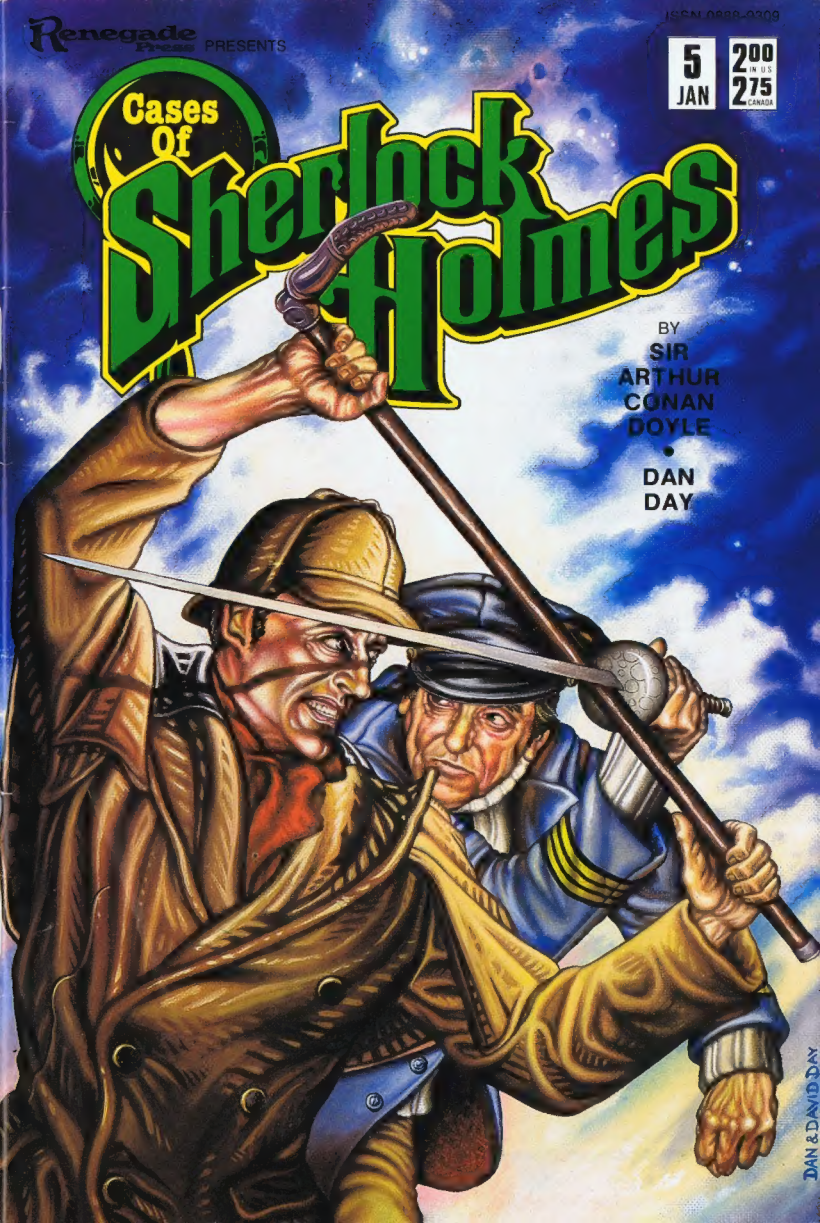
DAN DAY



DAN & DAVID DAY

A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Renegade is expanding in several different directions: we're adding new titles to the line; we're increasing our staff; and we're expanding our creator-base from national to international.

Humor is the major genre for our new titles. **OPEN SEASON,** which begins this month, is political/social humor. Creator Jim Bricker explores relationships, power, politics, and modern cultural impacts such as rock and roll. He takes a look at the icons of the eighties and takes them apart for our examination.

In January, we'll begin **HOLIDAY OUT,** an existential comic strip about a hotel that exists somewhere between reality and fantasy. Using humor as a tool, the **HOLIDAY OUT** creators walk their characters through situations such as being thrown into a western movie as punishment for subjecting innocent bystanders to bad puns, as well as discussing the impact of classified advertising (a modern form of communication) in relationships.

AMUSING STORIES is Scott Shaw's own irrepressible humor. In this title, he teams up with Disney animator Don Dougherty to present two wacky stories. You're probably familiar with Scott's former DC title, **CAPTAIN CARROT AND HIS AMAZING ZOO CREW.** In **AMUSING STORIES,** his "Urban Gorilla" is a talking, thinking ape who leaves Magilla Gorilla miles behind! The second feature, Don Dougherty's "Blast", reminds me of Dudley Doorright in space -- minus the horse!

We'll also be importing humor from Europe and Australia. One of France's most popular humorists is Lelong, creator of "Carmen Cru". This cantankerous old lady will be featured in **FRENCH ICE** beginning in March. Carmen is a "no nonsense" woman who is quite comfortable giving her viewpoints on love, death, and religion to anyone within earshot; just be grateful she doesn't live in your neighborhood!

Another import will be Australia's **ROSCOE THE DAWG.** This is one hound who's seen too many Bogie films. As he tries to rescue beautiful dames in distress, he fumbles his way into more secret doings than Dashiell Hammett could write about in a year! Roscoe's a tough private eye with a heart of gold.

Besides these titles, we have three new series on the way and a couple of one-shot books between now and next summer. Obviously to handle all of this expansion, I'll need some help. Promotion is an important aspect of Renegade because we have such a diverse line. Naturally what I needed was someone to direct promotion and give a hand editorially to those newcomers who request it: enter Wendi Lee, past editor of The Telegraph Wire and freelance writer. She'll be at several conventions next year and will set up new ad campaigns, something I've been wanting to implement for some time. Be sure to say hi to her if you come by our table at the next convention. Of course, if I'm there, I **expect** you to drop by and say hello.

I have a feeling that I've run out of space, so next month I'll tell you about our other new titles and more changes here at Renegade.

Deni

Comics Buyer's Guide Fan Awards for 1986

1. Favorite Editor, 2. Favorite Writer, 3. Favorite Penciller, 4. Favorite Inker, 5. Favorite Colorist 6. Favorite Letterer, 7. Favorite Cover Artist, 8. Favorite Comic-Book Story, 9. Favorite Comic Book, 10. Favorite Limited Comic-Book Series, 11. Favorite Graphic Novel, 12. Favorite Character, 13. Favorite Publication about Comics, and Phil Seuling Award for Favorite Direct-Sale-Only Title.

Only material cover-dated 1986 is eligible for consideration. Votes for ineligible material will not be counted.

Anyone may copy and circulate this ballot, and any fan may vote only once and vote for no more than one nominee in each category. Ballot-box stuffing will result in the destruction of all ballots involved. You need not vote in all categories. *Comics Buyer's Guide* is not eligible for Category 13.

A free copy of *Comics Buyer's Guide* #700, dated April 17, 1987 (which will carry the results of voting), will be sent to any U.S. voter who does not already have a current or expired subscription to *CBG*. Votes from other countries will be counted, but we regret that a sample copy cannot be sent unless the vote is accompanied by $1.50 in U.S. funds to cover costs of handling and shipping to another country.

Mail your ballot individually in a single envelope by February 28, 1987, to: ***Comics Buyer's Guide*** Fan Awards, 700 East State Street, Iola, Wisconsin 54990.

Include your **Name, Age, Sex, Street** or **Box, City, State,** and **ZIP.**

Please type or print your votes and information clearly.

Cases of Sherlock Holmes

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NO. 5 JANUARY 1987

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Distributors:

Bud Plant Inc.
Glenwood Dist.
Diamond Comics
Comics Unltd. Ltd.
Capital City Dist.
Styx Comic Service
Sunrise Comics
Now and Then Books
Andromeda Pub.
Second Genesis
Titan Dist.

Renegade Logo Design by Dave Roman
Cases of Sherlock Holmes Loge Design by Todd Waite

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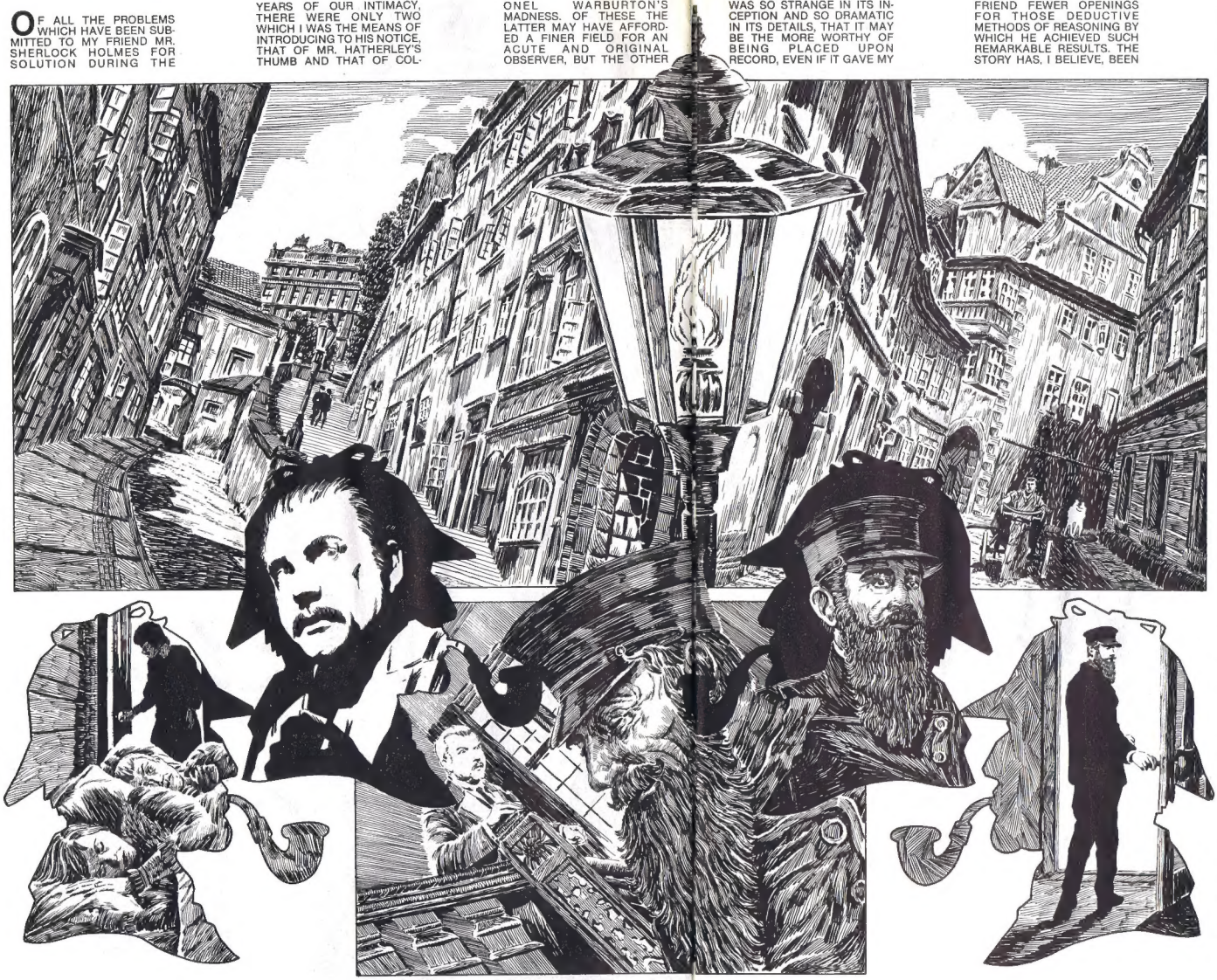
THE ADVENTURE OF THE ENGINEER'S THUMB



OF ALL THE PROBLEMS WHICH HAVE BEEN SUBMITTED TO MY FRIEND MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES FOR SOLUTION DURING THE YEARS OF OUR INTIMACY, THERE WERE ONLY TWO WHICH I WAS THE MEANS OF INTRODUCING TO HIS NOTICE, THAT OF MR. HATHERLEY'S THUMB AND THAT OF COLONEL WARBURTON'S MADNESS. OF THESE THE LATTER MAY HAVE AFFORDED A FINER FIELD FOR AN ACUTE AND ORIGINAL OBSERVER, BUT THE OTHER WAS SO STRANGE IN ITS INCEPTION AND SO DRAMATIC IN ITS DETAILS, THAT IT MAY BE THE MORE WORTHY OF BEING PLACED UPON RECORD, EVEN IF IT GAVE MY FRIEND FEWER OPENINGS FOR THOSE DEDUCTIVE METHODS OF REASONING BY WHICH HE ACHIEVED SUCH REMARKABLE RESULTS. THE STORY HAS, I BELIEVE, BEEN TOLD MORE THAN ONCE IN THE NEWSPAPERS, BUT, LIKE ALL SUCH NARRATIVES, ITS EFFECT IS MUCH LESS STRIKING WHEN SET FORTH *EN BLOC* IN A SINGLE HALF-COLUMN OF PRINT THAN WHEN THE FACTS SLOWLY EVOLVE BEFORE YOUR OWN EYES AND THE MYSTERY CLEARS GRADUALLY AWAY AS EACH NEW DISCOVERY FURNISHES A STEP WHICH LEADS ON TO THE COMPLETE TRUTH. AT THE TIME THE CIRCUMSTANCES MADE A DEEP IMPRESSION UPON ME, AND THE LAPSE OF TWO YEARS HAS HARDLY SERVED TO WEAKEN THE EFFECT.

IT WAS IN THE SUMMER OF '89, NOT LONG AFTER MY MARRIAGE, THAT THE EVENTS OCCURRED WHICH I AM NOW ABOUT TO SUMMARISE. I HAD RETURNED TO CIVIL PRACTICE, AND HAD FINALLY ABANDONED HOLMES IN HIS BAKER-STREET ROOMS, ALTHOUGH I CONTINUALLY VISITED HIM, AND OCCASIONALLY EVEN PERSUADED HIM TO FOREGO HIS BOHEMIAN HABITS SO FAR AS TO COME AND VISIT US. MY PRACTICE HAD STEADILY INCREASED, AND AS I HAPPENED TO LIVE AT NO VERY GREAT DISTANCE FROM PADDINGTON STATION, I GOT A FEW PATIENTS FROM AMONG THE OFFICIALS. ONE OF THESE WHOM I HAD CURED OF A PAINFUL AND LINGERING DISEASE, WAS NEVER WEARY OF ADVERTISING MY VIRTUES, AND OF ENDEAVOURING TO SEND ME ON EVERY SUFFERER OVER WHOM HE MIGHT HAVE ANY INFLUENCE.

ONE MORNING, AT A LITTLE BEFORE SEVEN O'CLOCK, I WAS AWAKENED BY THE MAID TAPPING AT THE DOOR, TO ANNOUNCE THAT TWO MEN HAD COME FROM PADDINGTON, AND WERE WAITING IN THE CONSULTING ROOM. I DRESSED HURRIEDLY, FOR I KNEW BY EXPERIENCE THAT RAILWAY CASES WERE SELDOM TRIVIAL, AND HASTENED DOWNSTAIRS. AS I DESCENDED, MY OLD ALLY, THE GUARD, CAME OUT OF THE ROOM, AND CLOSED THE DOOR TIGHTLY BEHIND HIM.

"I'VE GOT HIM HERE," HE WHISPERED, JERKING HIS THUMB OVER HIS SHOULDER; "HE'S ALL RIGHT."

"WHAT IS IT, THEN?" I ASKED, FOR HIS MANNER SUGGESTED THAT IT WAS SOME STRANGE CREATURE WHICH HE HAD CAGED UP IN MY ROOM.

"IT'S A NEW PATIENT," HE WHISPERED. "I THOUGHT I'D BRING HIM ROUND MYSELF; THEN HE COULDN'T SLIP AWAY. THERE HE IS, ALL SAFE AND SOUND. I MUST GO NOW, DOCTOR, I HAVE MY DOOTIES, JUST THE SAME AS YOU," AND OFF HE WENT, THIS TRUSTY TOUT, WITHOUT EVEN GIVING ME TIME TO THANK HIM.

I ENTERED MY CONSULTING ROOM, AND FOUND A GENTLEMAN SEATED BY THE TABLE. HE WAS QUIETLY DRESSED IN A SUIT OF HEATHER TWEED, WITH A SOFT CLOTH CAP, WHICH HE HAD LAID DOWN UPON MY BOOKS. RUND ONE OF HIS HANDS HE HAD A HANDKERCHIEF WRAPPED, WHICH WAS MOTTLED ALL OVER WITH BLOODSTAINS. HE WAS YOUNG, NOT MORE THAN FIVE-AND-TWENTY, I SHOULD SAY, WITH A STRONG MASCULINE FACE; BUT HE WAS EXCEEDINGLY PALE, AND GAVE ME THE IMPRESSION OF A MAN WHO WAS SUFFERING FROM SOME STRONG AGITATION, WHICH IT TOOK ALL HIS STRENGTH OF MIND TO CONTROL.

"I AM SORRY TO KNOCK YOU UP SO EARLY, DOCTOR," SAID HE. "BUT I HAVE HAD A VERY SERIOUS ACCIDENT DURING THE NIGHT, I CAME IN BY TRAIN THIS MORNING, AND ON INQUIRING AT PADDINGTON AS TO WHERE I MIGHT FIND A DOCTOR A WORTHY FELLOW VERY KINDLY ESCORTED ME HERE. I GAVE THE MAID A CARD, BUT I SEE THAT SHE HAS LEFT IT UPON THE SIDE TABLE."

I TOOK IT UP AND GLANCED AT IT. "MR. VICTOR HATHERLEY, HYDRAULIC ENGINEER, 16, VICTORIA-STREET (3RD FLOOR)." THAT WAS THE NAME, STYLE, AND ABODE OF MY MORNING VISITOR. "I REGRET THAT I HAVE KEPT YOU WAITING," SAID I, SITTING DOWN IN MY LIBRARY CHAIR. "YOU ARE FRESH FROM A NIGHT JOURNEY, I UNDERSTAND, WHICH IS IN ITSELF A MONOTONOUS OCCUPATION."

"OH, MY NIGHT COULD NOT BE CALLED MONOTONOUS," SAID HE, AND LAUGHED. HE LAUGHED VERY HEARTILY, WITH A HIGH RINGING NOTE, LEANING BACK IN HIS CHAIR, AND SHAKING HIS SIDES. ALL MY MEDICAL INSTINCTS ROSE UP AGAINST THAT LAUGH.

"STOP IT!" I CREID. "PULL YOURSELF TOGETHER!" AND I POURED OUT SOME WATER FROM A CARAFE.

IT WAS USELESS, HOWEVER. HE WAS OFF IN ONE OF THOSE HYSTERICAL OUTBURSTS WHICH COME UPON A STRONG NATURE WHEN SOME GREAT CRISIS IS OVER AND GONE. PRESENTLY HE CAME TO HIMSELF ONCE MORE, VERY WEARY AND BLUSHING HOTLY.

"I HAVE BEEN MAKING A FOOL OF MYSELF," HE GASPED.

"NOT AT ALL. DRINK THIS!" I DASHED SOME BRANDY INTO THE WATER, AND THE COLOUR BEGAN TO COME BACK TO HIS BLOODLESS CHEEKS.

"THAT'S BETTER!" SAID HE. "AND NOW, DOCTOR, PERHAPS YOU WOULD KINDLY ATTEND TO MY THUMB, OR RATHER TO THE PLACE WHERE MY THUMB USED TO BE."

HE UNWOUND THE HANDKERCHIEF AND HELD OUT HIS HAND. IT GAVE EVEN MY HARDENED NERVES A SHUDDER TO LOOK AT IT. THERE WERE FOUR PROTRUDING FINGERS AND A HORRID RED SPONGY SURFACE WHERE THE THUMB SHOULD HAVE BEEN. IT HAD BEEN HACKED OR TORN RIGHT OUT FROM THE ROOTS.

"GOOD HEAVENS!" I CRIED, "THIS IS A TERRIBLE INJURY. IT MUST HAVE BLED CONSIDERABLY."

"YES, IT DID. I FAINTED WHEN IT WAS DONE; AND I

THINK THAT I MUST HAVE BEEN SENSELESS FOR A LONG TIME. WHEN I CAME TO, I FOUND THAT IT WAS STILL BLEEDING, SO I TIED ONE END OF MY HANDKERCHIEF VERY TIGHTLY ROUND THE WRIST, AND BRACED IT UP WITH A TWIG.

"EXCELLENT! YOU SHOULD HAVE BEEN A SURGEON."

"IT IS A QUESTION OF HYDRAULICS, YOU SEE, AND CAME WITHIN MY OWN PROVINCE."

"THIS HAS BEEN DONE," SAID I, EXAMINING THE WOUND, "BY A VERY HEAVY AND SHARP INSTRUMENT."

"A THING LIKE A CLEAVER," SAID HE.

"AN ACCIDENT, I PRESUME?"

"BY NO MEANS."

"WHAT, A MURDEROUS ATTACK!"

"VERY MURDEROUS INDEED."

"YOU HORRIFY ME."

I SPONGED THE WOUND, CLEANED IT, DRESSED IT; AND, FINALLY, COVERED IT OVER WITH COTTON WADDING AND CARBOLISED BANDAGES. HE LAY BACK WITHOUT WINCING, THOUGH HE BIT HIS LIP FROM TIME TO TIME.

"HOW IS THAT?" I ASKED, WHEN I HAD FINISHED.

"CAPITAL! BETWEEN YOUR BRANDY AND YOUR BANDAGE, I FEEL A NEW MAN. I WAS VERY WEAK, BUT I HAD HAD A GOOD DEAL TO GO THROUGH."

"PERHAPS YOU HAD BETTER NOT SPEAK OF THE MATTER. IT IS EVIDENTLY TRYING TO YOUR NERVES."

"OH, NO; NOT NOW. I SHALL HAVE TO TELL MY TALE TO THE POLICE; BUT, BETWEEN OURSELVES, IF IT WERE NOT FOR THE CONVINCING EVIDENCE OF THIS WOUND OF MINE, I SHOULD BE SURPRISED IF THEY BELIEVED MY STATEMENT, FOR IT IS A VERY EXTRAORDINARY ONE, AND I HAVE NOT MUCH IN THE WAY OF PROOF WITH WHICH TO BACK IT UP. AND, EVEN IF THEY BELIEVE ME, THE CLUES WHICH I CAN GIVE THEM ARE SO VAGUE THAT IT IS A QUESTION WHETHER JUSTICE WILL BE DONE."

"HA!" CRIED I, "IF IT IS ANYTHING IN THE NATURE OF A PROBLEM WHICH YOU DESIRE TO SEE SOLVED, I SHOULD STRONGLY RECOMMEND YOU TO COME TO MY FRIEND MR. SHERLOCK HOLMES BEFORE YOU GO TO THE OFFICIAL POLICE."

"OH, I HAVE HEARD OF THAT FELLOW," ANSWERED MY VISITOR, "AND I SHOULD BE VERY GLAD IF HE WOULD TAKE THE MATTER UP, THOUGH OF COURSE I MUST USE THE OFFICIAL POLICE AS WELL. WOULD YOU GIVE ME AN INTRODUCTION TO HIM?"

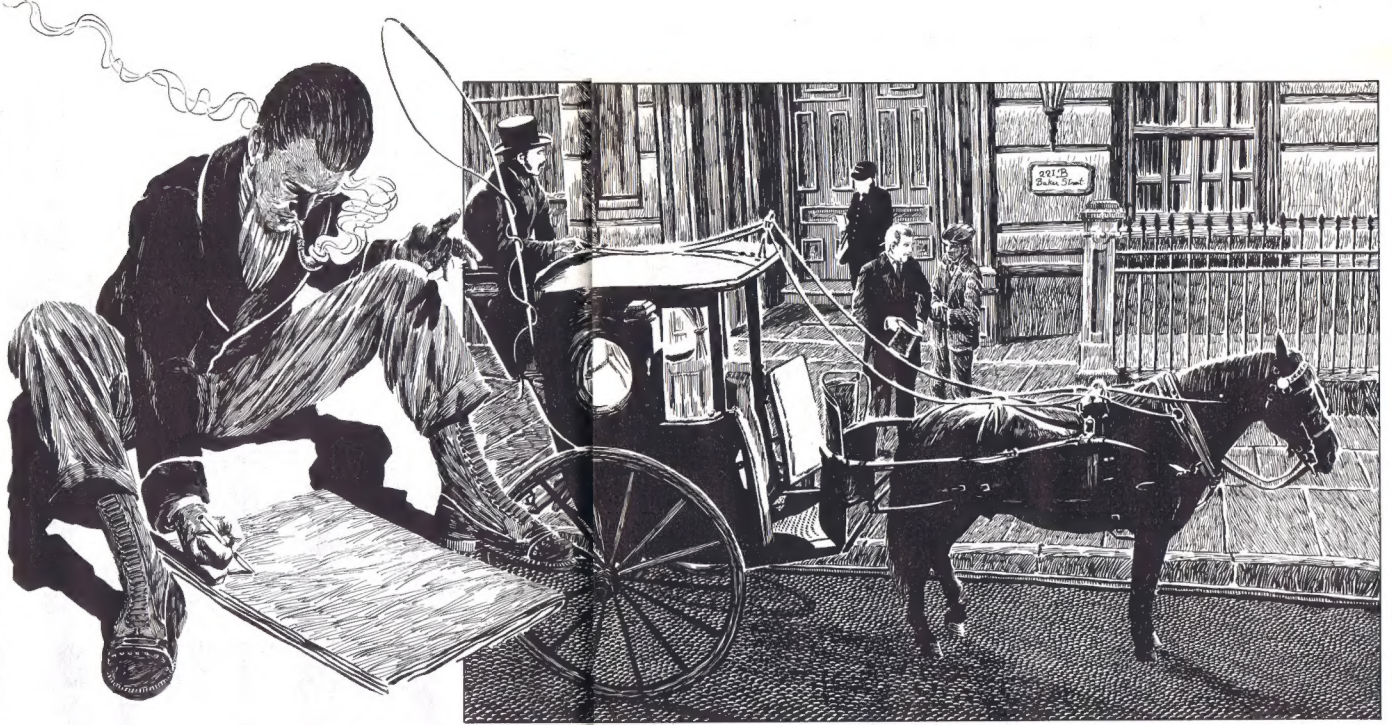
"I'LL DO BETTER. I'LL TAKE YOU ROUND TO HIM MYSELF."

"I SHOULD BE IMMENSELY OBLIGED TO YOU."

"WE'LL CALL A CAB, AND GO TOGETHER. WE SHALL JUST BE IN TIME TO HAVE A LITTLE BREAKFAST WITH HIM. DO YOU FEEL EQUAL TO IT?"

"YES, I SHALL NOT FEEL EASY UNTIL I HAVE TOLD MY STORY."

"THEN MY SERVANT WILL CALL A CAB, AND I SHALL BE WITH YOU IN AN INSTANT." I RUSHED UPSTAIRS, EXPLAINED THE MATTER SHORTLY TO MY WIFE, AND IN FIVE MINUTES WAS INSIDE A HANDSOM, DRIVING WITH MY NEW ACQUAINTANCE TO BAKER-STREET.



SHERLOCK HOLMES WAS, AS I EXPECTED, LOUNGING ABOUT HIS SITTING-ROOM IN HIS DRESSING-GOWN, READING THE AGONY COLUMN OF *THE TIMES*, AND SMOKING HIS BEFORE-BREAKFAST PIPE, WHICH WAS COMPOSED OF ALL THE PLUGS AND DOTTELS LEFT FROM HIS SMOKES OF THE DAY BEFORE, ALL CAREFULLY DRIED AND COLLECTED ON THE CORNER OF THE MANTEL-PIECE. HE RECEIVED US IN HIS QUIETLY GENIAL FASHION, ORDERED FRESH RASHERS AND EGGS, AND JOINED US IN A HEARTY MEAL. WHEN IT WAS CONCLUDED HE SETTLED OUR NEW ACQUAINTANCE UPON THE SOFA, PLACED A PILLOW BENEATH HIS HEAD, AND LAID A GLASS OF BRANDY AND WATER WITHIN HIS REACH.

"IT IS EASY TO SEE THAT YOUR EXPERIENCE HAS BEEN NO COMMON ONE, MR. HATHERLEY," SAID HE. "PRAY LIE DOWN THERE AND MAKE YOURSELF ABSOLUTELY AT HOME. TELL US WHAT YOU CAN, BUT STOP WHEN YOU ARE TIRED, AND KEEP UP YOUR STRENGTH WITH A LITTLE STIMULANT."

"THANK YOU," SAID MY PATIENT. "BUT I HAVE FELT ANOTHER MAN SINCE THE DOCTOR BANDAGED ME, AND I THINK THAT YOUR BREAKFAST HAS COMPLETED THE CURE. I SHALL TAKE UP AS LITTLE OF YOUR VALUABLE TIME AS POSSIBLE, SO I SHALL START AT ONCE UPON MY PECULIAR EXPERIENCES."

HOLMES SAT IN HIS BIG ARMCHAIR WITH THE WEARY, HEAVY-LIDDED EXPRESSION WHICH VEILED HIS KEEN AND EAGER NATURE, WHILE I SAT OPPOSITE TO HIM, AND WE LISTENED IN SILENCE TO THE STRANGE STORY WHICH OUR VISITOR DETAILED TO US.

"YOU MUST KNOW," SAID HE, "THAT I AM AN ORPHAN AND A BACHELOR, RESIDING ALONE IN LODGINGS IN LONDON. BY PROFESSION I AM A HYDRAULIC ENGINEER, AND I HAVE HAD CONSIDERABLE EXPERIENCE OF MY WORK DURING THE SEVEN YEARS THAT I WAS APPRENTICED TO VENNER AND MATHESON, THE WELL-KNOWN FIRM, OF GREENWICH. TWO YEARS AGO, HAVING SERVED MY TIME, AND HAVING ALSO COME INTO A FAIR SUM OF MONEY THROUGH MY POOR FATHER'S DEATH, I DETERMINED TO START IN BUSINESS FOR MYSELF AND TOOK PROFESSIONAL CHAMBERS IN VICTORIA-STREET.

"I SUPPOSE THAT EVERYONE FINDS HIS FIRST INDEPENDENT START IN BUSINESS A DREARY EXPERIENCE. TO ME IT HAS BEEN EXCEPTIONALLY SO. DURING TWO YEARS I HAVE HAD THREE CONSULTATIONS AND ONE SMALL JOB, AND THAT IS ABSOLUTELY ALL THAT MY PROFESSION HAS BROUGHT ME. MY GROSS TAKINGS AMOUNT TO TWENTY-SEVEN POUNDS TEN. EVERY DAY, FROM NINE IN THE MORNING UNTIL FOUR IN THE AFTERNOON, I WAITED IN MY LITTLE DEN, UNTIL AT LAST MY HEART BEGAN TO SINK, AND I CAME TO BELIEVE THAT I SHOULD NEVER HAVE ANY PRACTICE AT ALL.

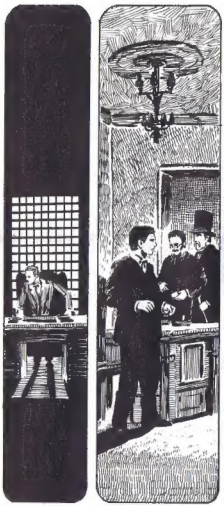
"YESTERDAY, HOWEVER, JUST AS I WAS THINKING OF LEAVING THE OFFICE, MY CLERK ENTERED TO SAY THERE WAS A GENTLEMAN WAITING WHO WISHED TO SEE ME UPON BUSINESS. HE BROUGHT UP A CARD, TOO, WITH THE NAME OF "COLONEL LYSANDER STARK" ENGRAVED UPON IT. CLOSE AT HIS HEELS CAME THE COLONEL HIMSELF, A MAN RATHER OVER THE MIDDLE SIZE BUT OF AN EXCEEDING THINNESS. I DO NOT THINK THAT I HAVE EVER SEEN SO THIN A MAN. HIS WHOLE FACE SHARPENED AWAY INTO NOSE AND CHIN, AND THE SKIN OF HIS CHEEKS WAS DRAWN QUITE TENSE OVER HIS OUTSTANDING BONES. YET THIS EMACIATION SEEMED TO BE HIS NATURAL HABIT, AND DUE TO NO DISEASE, FOR HIS EYE WAS BRIGHT, HIS STEP BRISK, AND HIS BEARING ASSURED. HE WAS PLAINLY BUT NEATLY DRESSED, AND HIS AGE, I SHOULD JUDGE, WOULD BE NEARER FORTY THAN THIRTY.

" 'MR. HATHERLEY?' SAID HE, WITH SOMETHING OF A GERMAN ACCENT. 'YOU HAVE BEEN RECOMMENDED TO ME, MR. HATHERLEY, AS BEING A MAN WHO IS NOT ONLY PROFICIENT IN HIS PROFESSION, BUT IS ALSO DISCREET AND CAPABLE OF PRESERVING A SECRET.'

"I BOWED, FEELING AS FLATTERED AS ANY YOUNG MAN WOULD AT SUCH AN ADDRESS. 'MAY I ASK WHO IT WAS WHO GAVE ME SO GOOD A CHARACTER?" I ASKED.

" 'WELL, PERHAPS IT IS BETTER THAT I SHOULD NOT TELL YOU THAT JUST AT THIS MOMENT. I HAVE IT FROM THE SAME SOURCE THAT YOU ARE BOTH AN ORPHAN AND A BACHELOR, AND ARE RESIDING ALONE IN LONDON.'

" 'THAT IS QUITE CORRECT,'" I ANSWERED, 'BUT YOU WILL EXCUSE ME IF I SAY THAT I CANNOT SEE HOW ALL THIS BEARS UPON MY PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS. I UNDERSTOOD THAT IT WAS ON A PROFESSIONAL MATTER THAT YOU WISHED TO SPEAK TO ME?'



" 'UNDOUBTEDLY SO. BUT YOU WILL FIND THAT ALL I SAY IS REALLY TO THE POINT. I HAVE A PROFESSIONAL COMMISSION FOR YOU, BUT ABSOLUTE SECRECY IS QUITE ESSENTIAL — *ABSOLUTE* SECRECY, YOU UNDERSTAND, AND OF COURSE WE MAY EXPECT THAT MORE FROM A MAN WHO IS ALONE THAN FROM ONE WHO LIVES IN THE BOSOM OF HIS FAMILY.'

" 'IF I PROMISE TO KEEP A SECRET,' SAID I, 'YOU MAY ABSOLUTELY DEPEND UPON MY DOING SO.'

"HE LOOKED VERY HARD AT ME AS I SPOKE, AND IT SEEMED TO ME THAT I HAD NEVER SEEN SO SUSPICIOUS AND QUESTIONING AN EYE.

" 'YOU DO PROMISE, THEN?' SAID HE AT LAST.

" 'YES, I PROMISE.'

" 'ABSOLUTE AND COMPLETE SILENCE, BEFORE, DURING, AND AFTER? NO REFERENCE TO THE MATTER AT ALL, EITHER IN WORD OR WRITING?'

" 'I HAVE ALREADY GIVEN YOU MY WORD.'

" 'VERY GOOD.' HE SUDDENLY SPRANG UP, AND DARTING LIKE LIGHTNING ACROSS THE ROOM HE FLUNG OPEN THE DOOR. THE PASSAGE OUTSIDE WAS EMPTY.

" 'THAT'S ALL RIGHT,' SAID HE, COMING BACK. 'I KNOW THAT CLERKS ARE SOMETIMES CURIOUS AS TO THEIR MASTER'S AFFAIRS. NOW WE CAN TALK IN SAFETY.' HE DREW UP HIS CHAIR VERY CLOSE TO MINE, AND BEGAN TO STARE AT ME AGAIN WITH THE SAME QUESTIONING AND THOUGHTFUL LOOK.

"A FEELING OF REPULSION, AND OF SOMETHING AKIN TO FEAR HAD BEGUN TO RISE WITHIN ME AT THE STRANGE ANTICS OF THIS FLESHLESS MAN. EVEN MY DREAD OF LOSING A CLIENT COULD NOT RESTRAIN ME FROM SHOWING MY IMPATIENCE.

" 'I BEG THAT YOU WILL START YOUR BUSINESS, SIR,' SAID I, 'MY TIME IS OF VALUE.' HEAVEN FORGIVE ME FOR THAT LAST SENTENCE, BUT THE WORDS CAME TO MY LIPS.

" 'HOW WOULD FIFTY GUINEAS FOR A NIGHT'S WORK SUIT YOU?' HE ASKED.

" 'MOST ADMIRABLY.'

" 'I SAY A NIGHT'S WORK, BUT AN HOUR'S WOULD BE NEARER THE MARK. I SIMPLY WANT YOUR OPINION ABOUT A HYDRAULIC STAMPING MACHINE WHICH HAS GOT OUT OF GEAR. IF YOU SHOW US WHAT IS WRONG WE SHALL SOON SET IT RIGHT OURSELVES. WHAT DO YOU THINK OF SUCH A COMMISSION AS THAT?'

" 'THE WORK APPEARS TO BE LIGHT, AND THE PAY MUNIFICENT.'

" 'PRECISELY SO. WE SHALL WANT YOU TO COME TONIGHT BY THE LAST TRAIN.'

" 'WHERE TO?'

" 'TO EYFORD, IN BERKSHIRE. IT IS A LITTLE PLACE NEAR THE BORDERS OF OXFORDSHIRE, AND WITHIN SEVEN MILES OF READING. THERE IS A TRAIN FROM PADDINGTON WHICH WOULD BRING YOU IN THERE AT ABOUT ELEVEN FIFTEEN.'

" 'VERY GOOD.'

" 'I SHALL COME DOWN IN A CARRIAGE TO MEET YOU.'

" 'THERE IS A DRIVE, THEN?'

" 'YES, OUR LITTLE PLACE IS QUITE OUT IN THE COUNTRY. IT IS A GOOD SEVEN MILES FROM EYFORD STATION.'

" 'THEN WE CAN HARDLY GET THERE BEFORE MIDNIGHT. I SUPPOSE THERE WOULD BE NO CHANCE OF A TRAIN BACK. I SHOULD BE COMPELLED TO STOP THE NIGHT.'

" 'YES, WE COULD EASILY GIVE YOU A SHAKEDOWN.'

" 'THAT IS VERY AWKWARD. COULD I NOT COME AT SOME MORE CONVENIENT HOUR?'

" 'WE HAVE JUDGED IT BEST THAT YOU SHOULD COME LATE. IT IS TO RECOMPENSE YOU FOR ANY INCONVENIENCE THAT WE ARE PAYING TO YOU, A YOUNG AND UNKNOWN MAN, A FEE WHICH WOULD BUY AN OPINION FROM THE VERY HEADS OF YOUR PROFESSION. STILL, OF COURSE, IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO DRAW OUT OF THE BUSINESS, THERE IS PLENTY OF TIME TO DO SO.'

"I THOUGHT OF THE FIFTY GUINEAS, AND OF HOW VERY USEFUL THEY WOULD BE TO ME. 'NOT AT ALL,' SAID I, 'I SHALL BE VERY HAPPY TO ACCOMMODATE MYSELF TO YOUR WISHES. I SHOULD LIKE, HOWEVER, TO UNDERSTAND A LITTLE MORE CLEARLY WHAT IT IS THAT YOU WISH ME TO DO.'

" 'QUITE SO. IT IS VERY NATURAL THAT THE PLEDGE OF SECRECY WHICH WE HAVE EXACTED FROM YOU SHOULD HAVE AROUSED YOUR CURIOSITY. I HAVE NO WISH TO COMMIT YOU TO ANYTHING WITHOUT YOUR HAVING IT ALL LAID BEFORE YOU. I SUPPOSE THAT WE ARE ABSOLUTELY SAFE FROM EAVESDROPPERS?'

" 'ENTIRELY.'

" 'THEN THE MATTER STANDS THUS. YOU ARE PROBABLY AWARE THAT FULLER'S EARTH IS A VALUABLE PRODUCT, AND THAT IT IS ONLY FOUND IN ONE OR TWO PLACES IN ENGLAND?'

" 'I HAVE HEARD SO.'

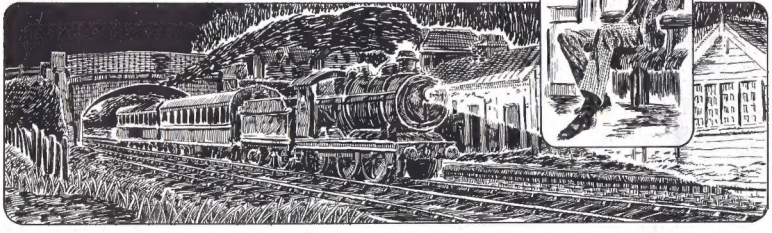
" 'SOME LITTLE TIME AGO I BOUGHT A SMALL PLACE — A VERY SMALL PLACE — WITHIN TEN MILES OF READING. I WAS FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO DISCOVER THAT THERE WAS A DEPOSIT OF FULLER'S EARTH IN ONE OF MY FIELDS. ON EXAMINING IT, HOWEVER, I FOUND THAT THIS DEPOSIT WAS A COMPARATIVELY SMALL ONE, AND THAT IT FORMED A LINK BETWEEN TWO VERY MUCH LARGER ONES UPON THE RIGHT AND THE LEFT — BOTH OF THEM, HOWEVER, IN THE GROUNDS OF MY NEIGHBOURS. THESE GOOD PEOPLE WERE ABSOLUTELY IGNORANT THAT THEIR LAND CONTAINED THAT WHICH WAS QUITE AS VALUABLE AS A GOLD MINE. NATURALLY, IT WAS TO MY INTEREST TO BUY THEIR LAND BEFORE THEY DISCOVERED ITS TRUE VALUE; BUT UNFORTUNATELY, I HAD NO CAPITAL BY WHICH I COULD DO THIS. I TOOK A FEW OF MY FRIENDS INTO THE SECRET, HOWEVER, AND THEY SUGGESTED THAT WE SHOULD QUIETLY AND SECRETLY WORK OUR OWN LITTLE DEPOSIT, AND THAT IN THIS WAY WE SHOULD EARN THE MONEY WHICH WOULD ENABLE US TO BUY THE NEIGHBOURING FIELDS. THIS WE HAVE NOW BEEN DOING FOR SOME TIME, AND IN ORDER TO HELP US IN OUR OPERATIONS WE ERECTED A HYRAULIC PRESS. THIS PRESS, AS I HAVE ALREADY EXPLAINED, HAS GOT OUT OF ORDER, AND WE WISH YOUR ADVICE UPON THE SUBJECT. WE GUARD OUR SECRET VERY JEALOUSLY, HOWEVER, AND IF IT ONCE BECAME KNOWN THAT WE HAD HYDRAULIC ENGINEERS COMING TO OUR LITTLE HOUSE, IT WOULD SOON ROUSE INQUIRY, AND THEN, IF THE FACTS CAME OUT, IT WOULD BE GOOD-BYE TO ANY CHANCE OF GETTING THESE FIELDS AND CARRYING OUT OUR PLANS. THAT IS WHY I HAVE MADE YOU PROMISE THAT YOU WILL NOT TELL A HUMAN BEING THAT YOU ARE GOING TO EYFORD TO-NIGHT. I HOPE THAT I MAKE IT ALL PLAIN?'

" 'I QUITE FOLLOW YOU,' SAID I. 'THE ONLY POINT WHICH I COULD NOT QUITE UNDERSTAND, WAS WHAT USE YOU COULD MAKE OF A HYDRAULIC PRESS IN EXCAVATING FULLER'S EARTH, WHICH, AS I UNDERSTAND, IS DUG OUT LIKE GRAVEL FROM A PIT.'

" 'AH!' SAID HE, CARELESSLY, 'WE HAVE OUR OWN PROCESS. WE COMPRESS THE EARTH INTO BRICKS, SO AS TO REMOVE THEM WITHOUT REVEALING WHAT THEY ARE. BUT THAT IS A MERE DETAIL. I HAVE TAKEN YOU FULLY INTO MY CONFIDENCE NOW, MR. HATHERLEY, AND I HAVE SHOWN YOU HOW I TRUST YOU.' HE ROSE As HE SPOKE. 'I SHALL EXPECT YOU, THEN, AT EYFORD AT 11.15.'

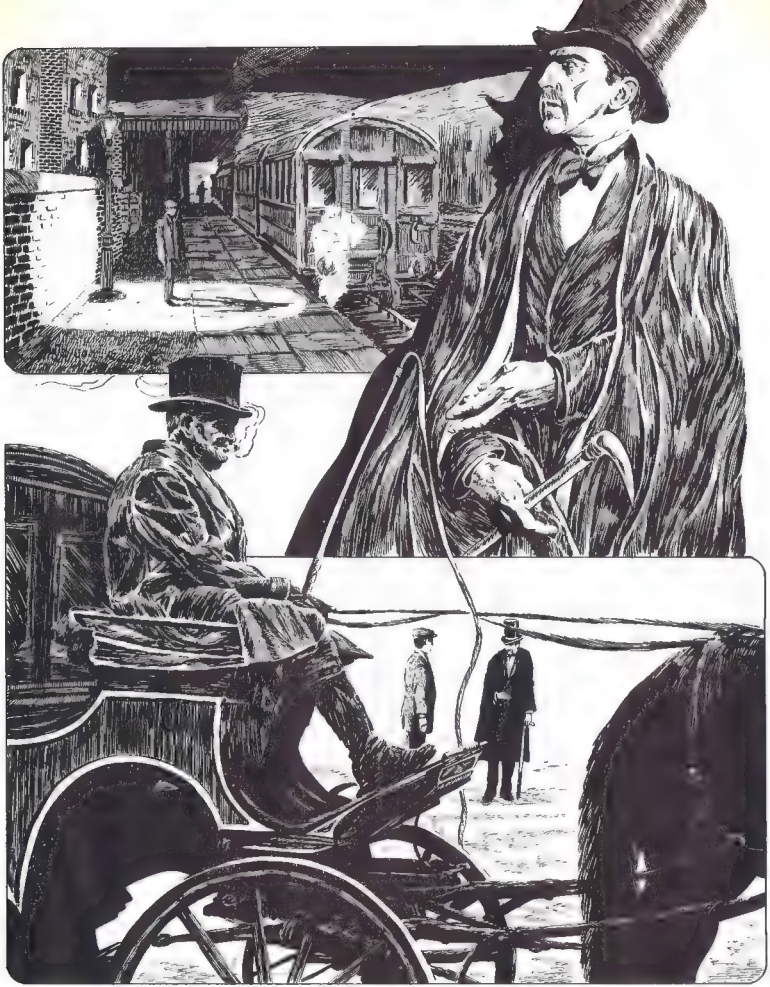
" 'I SHALL CERTAINLY BE THERE.'

" 'AND NOT A WORD TO A SOUL.' HE LOOKED AT ME WITH A LAST LONG, QUESTIONING GAZE, AND THEN, PRESSING MY HAND IN A COLD, DANK GRASP, HE HURRIED FROM THE ROOM.



"WELL, WHEN I CAME TO THINK IT ALL OVER IN COOL BLOOD I WAS VERY MUCH ASTONISHED, AS YOU MAY BOTH THINK, AT THIS SUDDEN COMMISSION WHICH HAD BEEN ENTRUSTED TO ME. ON THE ONE HAND, OF COURSE, I WAS GLAD, FOR THE FEE WAS AT LEAST TENFOLD WHAT I SHOULD HAVE ASKED HAD I SET A PRICE UPON MY OWN SERVICES, AND IT WAS POSSIBLE THAT THIS ORDER MIGHT LEAD TO OTHER ONES. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE FACE AND MANNER OF MY PATRON HAD MADE AN UNPLEASANT IMPRESSION UPON ME, AND I COULD NOT THINK THAT HIS EXPLANATION OF THE FULLER'S EARTH WAS SUFFICIENT TO EXPLAIN THE NECESSITY FOR MY COMING AT MIDNIGHT, AND HIS EXTREME ANXIETY LEST I SHOULD TELL ANYONE OF MY ERRAND. HOWEVER, I THREW ALL FEARS TO THE WINDS, ATE A HEARTY SUPPER, DROVE TO PADDINGTON, AND STARTED OFF, HAVING OBEYED TO THE LETTER THE INJUNCTION AS TO HOLDING MY TONGUE.

"AT READING I HAD TO CHANGE NOT ONLY MY CARRIAGE BUT MY STATION.



HOWEVER, I WAS IN TIME FOR THE LAST TRAIN TO EYFORD, AND I REACHED THE LITTLE DIM LIT STATION AFTER ELEVEN O'CLOCK. I WAS THE ONLY PASSENGER WHO GOT OUT THERE, AND THERE WAS NO ONE UPON THE PLATFORM SAVE A SINGLE SLEEPY PORTER WITH A LANTERN. AS I PASSED OUT THROUGH THE WICKET GATE, HOWEVER, I FOUND MY ACQUAINTANCE OF THE MORNING WAITING IN THE SHADOW UPON THE OTHER SIDE. WITHOUT A WORD HE GRASPED MY ARM AND HURRIED ME INTO A CARRIAGE, THE DOOR OF WHICH WAS STANDING OPEN. HE DREW UP THE WINDOWS ON EITHER SIDE, TAPPED ON THE WOODWORK, AND AWAY WE WENT AS HARD AS THE HORSE COULD GO.

"ONE HORSE?" INTERJECTED HOLMES.

"YES, ONLY ONE."

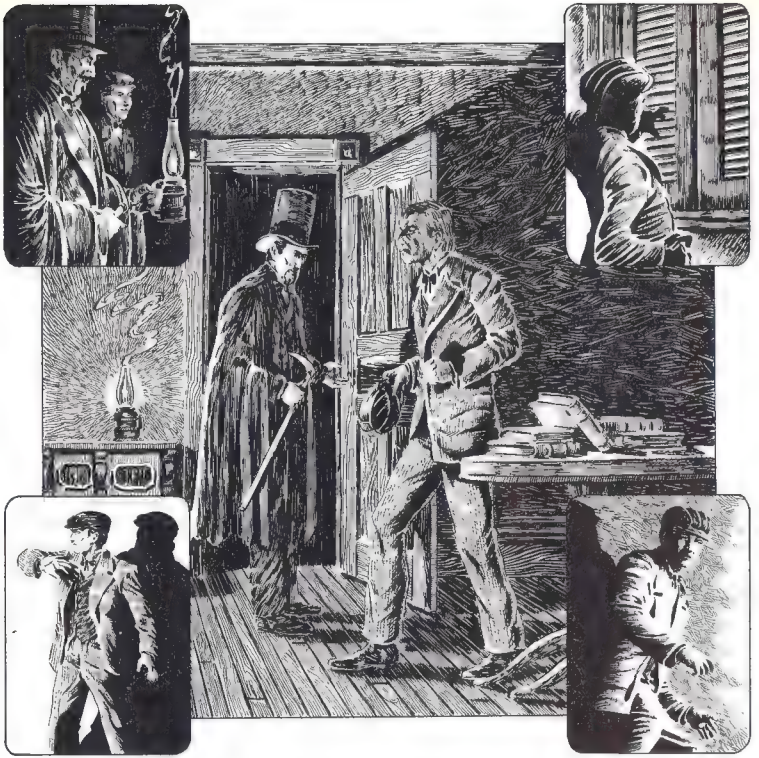
"DID YOU OBSERVE THE COLOUR?"

"YES, I SAW IT BY THE SIDELIGHTS WHEN I WAS STEPPING INTO THE CARRIAGE. IT WAS A CHESTNUT."

"TIRED-LOOKING OR FRESH?"

"OH, FRESH AND GLOSSY."

"THANK YOU. I AM SORRY TO HAVE INTERRUPTED YOU. PRAY CONTINUE YOUR MOST INTERESTING STATEMENT."



"AWAY WE WENT THEN, AND WE DROVE FOR AT LEAST AN HOUR. COLONEL LYSANDER STARK HAD SAID THAT IT WAS ONLY SEVEN MILES, BUT I SHOULD THINK, FROM THE RATE THAT WE SEEMED TO GO, AND FROM THE TIME THAT WE TOOK, THAT IT MUST HAVE BEEN NEARER TWELVE. HE SAT AT MY SIDE IN SILENCE ALL THE TIME, AND I WAS AWARE, MORE THAN ONCE WHEN I GLANCED IN HIS DIRECTION, THAT HE WAS LOOKING AT ME WITH GREAT INTENSITY. THE COUNTRY ROADS SEEM TO BE NOT VERY GOOD IN THAT PART OF THE WORLD, FOR WE LURCHED AND JOLTED TERRIBLY. I TRIED TO LOOK OUT OF THE WINDOWS TO SEE SOMETHING OF WHERE WE WERE, BUT THEY WERE MADE OF FROSTED GLASS, AND I COULD MAKE OUT NOTHING SAVE THE OCCASIONAL BRIGHT BLURR OF A PASSING LIGHT. NOW AND THEN I HAZARDED SOME REMARK TO BREAK THE MONOTONY OF THE JOURNEY, BUT THE COLONEL ANSWERED ONLY IN MONOSYLLABLES, AND THE CONVERSATION SOON FLAGGED. AT LAST, HOWEVER, THE BUMPING OF THE ROAD WAS EXCHANGED FOR THE CRISP SMOOTHNESS OF A GRAVEL DRIVE, AND THE CARRIAGE CAME TO A STAND. COLONEL LYSANDER STARK SPRANG OUT, AND AS I FOLLOWED AFTER HIM, PULLED ME SWIFTLY INTO A PORCH WHICH GAPED IN FRONT OF US. WE STEPPED, AS IT WERE, RIGHT OUT OF THE CARRIAGE AND INTO THE HALL, SO THAT I FAILED TO CATCH THE MOST FLEETING GLANCE OF THE FRONT OF THE HOUSE. THE INSTANT THAT I HAD CROSSED THE THRESHOLD THE DOOR SLAMMED HEAVILY BEHIND US, AND I HEARD FAINTLY THE RATTLE OF THE WHEELS AS THE CARRIAGE DROVE AWAY.

"IT WAS PITCH DARK INSIDE THE HOUSE, AND THE COLONEL FUMBLED ABOUT LOOKING FOR MATCHES, AND MUTTERING UNDER HIS BREATH SUDDENLY A DOOR OPENED AT THE OTHER END OF THE PASSAGE, AND A LONG, GOLDEN BAR OF LIGHT SHOT OUT IN OUR DIRECTION. IT GREW BROADER, AND A WOMAN APPEARED WITH A LAMP IN HER HAND, WHICH SHE HELD ABOVE HER HEAD, PUSHING HER FACE FORWARD AND PEERING AT US. I COULD SEE THAT SHE WAS PRETTY, AND FROM THE GLOSS WITH WHICH THE LIGHT SHONE UPON HER DARK DRESS I KNEW THAT IT WAS A RICH MATERIAL. SHE SPOKE A FEW WORDS IN A

FOREIGN TONGUE IN A TONE AS THOUGH ASKING A QUESTION, AND WHEN MY COMPANION ANSWERED IN A GRUFF MONOSYLLABLE SHE GAVE SUCH A START THAT THE LAMP NEARLY FELL FROM HER HAND. COLONEL STARK WENT UP TO HER, WHISPERED SOMETHING IN HER EAR, AND THEN, PUSHING HER BACK INTO THE ROOM FROM WHENCE SHE HAD COME, HE WALKED TOWARDS ME AGAIN WITH THE LAMP IN HIS HAND.

"'PERHAPS YOU WILL HAVE THE KINDNESS TO WAIT IN THIS ROOM FOR A FEW MINUTES,' SAID HE, THROWING OPEN ANOTHER DOOR. IT WAS A QUIET LITTLE, PLAINLY FURNISHED ROOM, WITH A ROUND TABLE IN THE CENTRE, ON WHICH SEVERAL GERMAN BOOKS WERE SCATTERED. COLONEL STARK LAID DOWN THE LAMP ON THE TOP OF A HARMONIUM BESIDE THE DOOR. 'I SHALL NOT KEEP YOU WAITING AN INSTANT,' SAID HE, AND VANISHED INTO THE DARKNESS.

"I GLANCED AT THE BOOKS UPON THE TABLE, AND IN SPITE OF MY IGNORANCE OF GERMAN I COULD SEE THAT TWO OF THEM WERE TREATISES ON SCIENCE, THE OTHERS BEING VOLUMES OF POETRY. THEN I WALKED ACROSS THE WINDOW, HOPING THAT I MIGHT CATCH SOME GLIMPSE OF THE COUNTRY SIDE, BUT AN OAK SHUTTER, HEAVILY BARRED, WAS FOLDED ACROSS IT. IT WAS A WONDERFULLY SILENT HOUSE THERE WAS AN OLD CLOCK TICKING LOUDLY SOMEWHERE IN THE PASSAGE, BUT OTHERWISE EVERYTHING WAS DEADLY STILL. A VAGUE FEELING OF UNEASINESS BEGAN TO STEAL OVER ME. WHO WERE THESE GERMAN PEOPLE, AND WHAT WERE THEY DOING, LIVING IN THIS STRANGE, OUT-OF-THE-WAY PLACE? I WAS TEN MILES OR SO FROM EYFORD, THAT WAS ALL I KNEW, BUT WHETHER NORTH, SOUTH, EAST, OR WEST I HAD NO IDEA. FOR THAT MATTER, READING, AND POSSIBLY OTHER LARGE TOWNS, WERE WITHIN THAT RADIUS, SO THE PLACE MIGHT NOT BE SO SECLUDED AFTER ALL. YET IT WAS QUITE CERTAIN FROM THE ABOSLUTE SITLLNESS THAT WE WERE IN THE COUNTRY. I PACED UP AND DOWN THE ROOM, HUMMING A TUNE UNDER MY BREATH TO KEEP UP MY SPIRITS, AND FEELING THAT I WAS THOROUGHLY EARNING MY FIFTY-GUINEA FEE.

"SUDDENLY, WITHOUT ANY PRELIMINARY SOUND IN THE MIDST OF THE UTTER STILLNESS, THE DOOR OF MY ROOM SWUNG SLOWLY OPEN. THE WOMAN WAS STANDING IN THE APERTURE, THE DARKNESS OF THE HALL BEHIND HER, THE YELLOW LIGHT FROM MY LAMP BEATING UPON HER EAGER AND BEAUTIFUL FACE. I COULD SEE AT A GLANCE THAT SHE WAS SICK WITH FEAR, AND THE SIGHT SENT A CHILL TO MY OWN HEART. SHE HELD UP ONE SHAKING FINGER TO WARN ME TO BE SILENT, AND SHE SHOT A FEW WHISPERED WORKDS OF BROKEN ENGLISH AT ME, HER EYES GLANCING BACK, LIKE THOSE OF A FRIGHTENED HORSE, INTO THE GLOOM BEHIND HER.

" 'I WOULD GO,' SAID SHE, TRYING HARD, AS IT SEEMED TO ME, TO SPEAK CALMLY; 'I WOULD GO. I SHOULD NOT STAY HERE. THERE IS NO GOOD FOR YOU TO DO.'

" 'BUT, MADAM,' SAID I, 'I HAVE NOT YET DONE WHAT I CAME FOR. I CANNOT POSSIBLY LEAVE UNTIL I HAVE SEEN THE MACHINE.'

" 'IT IS NOT WORTH YOUR WHILE TO WAIT,' SHE WENT ON. 'YOU CAN PASS THROUGH THE DOOR; NO ONE HINDERS,' AND THEN, SEEING THAT I SMILED AND SHOOK MY HEAD, SHE SUDDENLY THREW ASIDE HER CONSTRAINT, AND MADE A STEP FORWARD, WITH HER HANDS WRUNG TOGETHER. 'FOR THE LOVE OF HEAVEN!' SHE WHISPERED, 'GET AWAY FROM HERE BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE!'

'BUT I AM SOMEWHAT HEADSTRONG BY NATURE, AND THE MORE READY TO ENGAGE IN AN AFFAIR WHEN THERE IS SOME OBSTACLE IN THE WAY. I THOUGHT OF MY FIFTY-GUINEA FEE, OF MY WEARISOME JOURNEY, AND OF THE UNPLEASANT NIGHT WHICH SEEMED TO BE BEFORE ME. WAS IT ALL TO GO FOR NOTHING? WHY SHOULD I SLINK AWAY WITHOUT HAVING CARRIED

OUT MY COMMISSION, AND WITHOUT THE PAYMENT WHICH WAS MY DUE? THIS WOMAN MIGHT, FOR ALL I KNEW, BE A MONOMANIAC. WITH A STOUT BEARING, THEREFORE, THOUGH HER MANNER HAD SHAKEN ME MORE THAN I CARED TO CONFESS, I STILL SHOOK MY HEAD, AND DECLARED MY INTENTION OF REMAINING WHERE I WAS. SHE WAS ABOUT TO RENEW HER ENTREATIES WHEN A DOOR SLAMMED OVERHEAD, AND THE SOUND OF SEVERAL FOOTSTEPS WERE HEARD UPON THE STAIRS. SHE LISTENED FOR AN INSTANT, THREW UP HER HANDS WITH A DESPAIRING GESTURE, AND VANISHED AS SUDDENLY AND AS NOISELESSLY AS SHE HAD COME.

"THE NEWCOMERS WERE COLONEL LYSANDER STARK, AND A SHORT THICK MAN WITH A CHINCHILLA BEARD GROWING OUT OF THE CREASES OF HIS DOUBLE CHIN, WHO WAS INTRODUCED TO ME AS MR FERGUSON

" 'THIS IS MY SECRETARY AND MANAGER,' SAID THE COLONEL. 'BY THE WAY, I WAS UNDER THE IMPRESSION THAT I LEFT THIS DOOR SHUT JUST NOW. I FEAR THAT YOU HAVE FELT THE DRAUGHT.'

" 'ON THE CONTRARY,' SAID I, 'I OPENED THE DOOR MYSELF, BECAUSE I FELT THE ROOM TO BE A LITTLE CLOSE.'

"HE SHOT ONE OF HIS SUSPICIOUS GLANCES AT ME. 'PERHAPS WE HAD BETTER PROCEED TO BUSINESS, THEN,' SAID HE. 'MR. FERGUSON AND I WILL TAKE YOU UP TO SEE THE MACHINE.'

" 'I HAD BETTER PUT MY HAT ON, I SUPPOSE."

" 'OH NO, IT IS IN THE HOUSE.'

" 'WHAT, YOU DIG FULLER'S EARTH IN THE HOUSE?'

" 'NO, NO. THIS IS ONLY WHERE WE COMPRESS IT. BUT NEVER MIND THAT! ALL WE WISH YOU TO DO IS TO EXAMINE THE MACHINE, AND TO LET US KNOW WHAT IS WRONG WITH IT.'

"WE WENT UPSTAIRS TOGETHER, THE COLONEL FIRST WITH THE LAMP, THE FAT MANAGER, AND I BEHIND HIM. IT WAS A LABYRINTH OF AN OLD HOUSE, WITH CORRIDORS, PASSAGES, NARROW WINDING STAIRCASES, AND LITTLE LOW DOORS, THE THRESHOLDS OF WHICH WERE HOLLOWED OUT BY THE GENERATIONS WHO HAD CROSSED THEM. THERE WERE NO CARPETS, AND NO SIGNS OF ANY FURNITURE ABOVE THE GROUND FLOOR, WHILE THE PLASTER WAS PEELING OFF THE WALLS, AND THE DAMP WAS BREAKING THROUGH IN GREEN, UNHEALTHY BLOTCHES. I TRIED TO PUT ON AN UNCONCERNED AN AIR AS POSSIBLE, BUT I HAD NOT FORGOTTEN THE WARNINGS OF THE LADY, EVEN THOUGH I DISREGARDED THEM, AND I KEPT A KEEN EYE UPON MY TWO COMPANIONS. FERGUSON APPEARED TO BE A MOROSE AND SILENT MAN, BUT I COULD SEE FROM THE LITTLE THAT HE SAID THAT HE WAS AT LEAST A FELLOW-COUNTRYMAN.

"COLONEL LYSANDER STARK STOPPPED AT LAST BEFORE A LOW DOOR, WHICH HE UNLOCKED. WITHIN WAS A SMALL SQUARE ROOM, IN WHICH THE THREE OF US COULD HARDLY GET AT ONE TIME. FERGUSON REMAINED OUTSIDE, AND THE COLONEL USHERED ME IN.

" 'WE ARE NOW,' SAID HE, 'ACTUALLY WITHIN THE HYDRAULIC PRESS, AND IT WOULD BE A PARTICULARLY UNPLEASANT THING FOR US IF ANYONE WERE TO TURN IT ON. THE CEILING OF THIS SMALL CHAMBER IS REALLY THE END OF THE DESCENDING PISTON, AND IT COMES DOWN WITH THE FORCE OF MANY TONS UPON THIS METAL FLOOR. THERE ARE SMALL LATERAL COLUMNS OF WATER OUTSIDE WHICH RECEIVE THE FORCE, AND WHICH TRANSMIT AND MULTIPLY IT IN THE MANNER WHICH IS FAMILIAR TO YOU. THE MACHINE GOES READILY ENOUGH, BUT THERE IS SOME STIFFNESS IN THE WORKING OF IT, AND IT HAS LOST A LITTLE OF ITS FORCE. PERHAPS YOU WILL HAVE THE GOODNESS TO LOOK IT OVER, AND TO SHOW US HOW WE CAN SET IT RIGHT.'

"I TOOK THE LAMP FROM HIM, AND I EXAMINED THE MACHINE VERY THOROUGHLY. IT WAS INDEED A GIGANTIC ONE, AND CAPABLE OF EXERCISING ENORMOUS PRESSURE WHEN I PASSED OUTSIDE, HOWEVER,' AND PRESSED DOWN THE LEVERS WHICH CONTROLLED IT, I KNEW AT ONCE BY THE WHISHING SOUND THAT THERE WAS A SLIGHT LEAKAGE, WHICH ALLOWED A REGURGITATION OF WATER THROUGH ONE OF THE SIDE CYLINDERS. AN EXAMINATION SHOWED THAT ONE OF THE INDIARUBBER BANDS WHICH WAS ROUND THE HEAD OF A DRIVING ROD HAD SHRUNK SO AS NOT QUITE TO FILL THE SOCKET ALONG WHICH IT WORKED. THS WAS CLEARLY THE CAUSE OF THE LOSS OF POWER, AND I POINTED IT OUT TO MY COMPANIONS, WHO FOLLOWED MY REMARKS VERY CAREFULLY, AND ASKED SEVERAL PRACTICAL QUESTIONS AS TO HOW THEY SHOULD PROCEED TO SET IT RIGHT. WHEN I HAD MADE IT CLEAR TO THEM, I RETURNED TO THE MAIN CHAMBER OF THE MACHINE, AND TOOK A GOOD LOOK AT IT TO SATISFY MY OWN CURIOSITY. IT WAS OBVIOUS AT A GLANCE THAT THE STORY OF THE FULLER'S EARTH WAS THE MEREST FABRICATION, FOR IT WOULD BE ABSURD TO SUPPOSE THAT SO POWERFUL AN ENGINE COULD BE DESIGNED FOR SO INADEQUATE A PURPOSE. THE WALLS WERE OF WOOD, BUT THE FLOOR CONSISTED OF A LARGE IRON TROUGH, AND WHEN I CAME TO EXAMINE IT I COULD SEE A CRUST OF METALLIC DEPOSIT ALL OVER IT. I HAD STOOPED AND WAS SCRAPING AT THIS TO SEE EXACTLY WHAT IT WAS WHEN I HEARD A MUTTERED EXCLAMATION IN GERMAN, AND SAW THE CADAVEROUS FACE OF THE COLONEL LOOKING DOWN AT ME.

" 'WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE?' HE ASKED

"I FELT ANGRY AT HAVING BEEN TRICKED BY SO ELABORATE A STORY AS THAT WHICH HE HAD TOLD ME. 'I WAS ADMIRING YOUR FULLER'S EARTH,' SAID I; 'I THINK THAT I SHOULD BE BETTER ABLE TO ADVISE YOU AS TO YOUR MACHINE IF I KNEW WHAT THE EXACT PURPOSE WAS FOR WHICH IT WAS USED.'

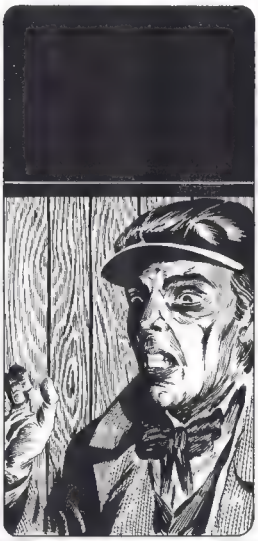
"THE INSTANT THAT I UTTERED THE WORDS, I REGRETTED THE RASHNESS OF MY SPEECH. HIS FACE SET HARD, AND A BALEFUL LIGHT SPRANG UP IN HIS GREY EYES.

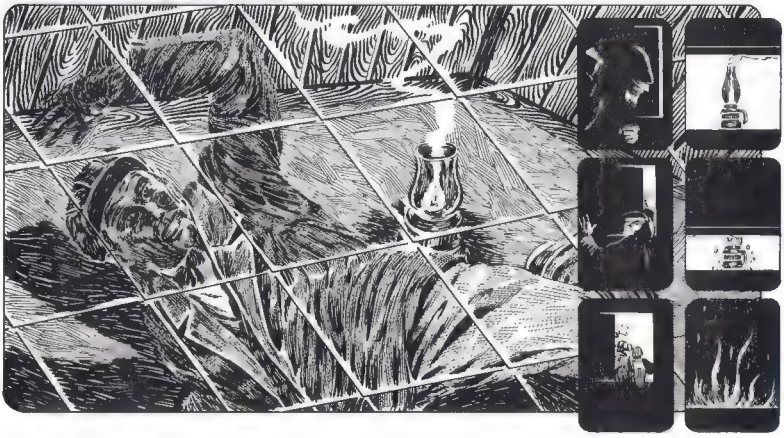
" 'VERY WELL,' SAID HE, 'YOU SHALL KNOW ALL ABOUT THE MACHINE.' HE TOOK A STEP BACKWARD, SLAMMED THE LITTLE DOOR, AND TURNED THE KEY IN THE LOCK. I RUSHED TOWARDS IT AND PULLED AT THE HANDLE, BUT IT WAS QUITE SECURE, AND DID NOT GIVE IN THE LEAST TO MY KICKS AND SHOVES. 'HULLO!' I YELLED, 'HULLO! COLONEL! LET ME OUT!'

"AND THEN SUDDENLY IN THE SILENCE I HEARD A SOUND WHICH SENT MY HEART INTO MY MOUTH. IT WAS THE CLANK OF THE LEVERS, AND THE SWISH OF THE LEAKING CYLINDER. HE HAD SET THE ENGINE AT WORK. THE LAMP STILL STOOD UPON THE FLOOR WHERE I HAD PLACED IT WHEN EXAMINING THE TROUGH. BY ITS LIGHT I SAW THAT THE BLACK CEILING WAS COMING DOWN UPON ME, SLOWLY, JERKILY, BUT, AS NONE KNEW BETTER THAN MYSELF, WITH A FORCE WHICH MUST WITHIN A MINUTE GRIND ME TO A SHAPELESS PULP. I THREW MYSELF, SCREAMING, AGAINST THE DOOR, AND DRAGGED WITH MY NAILS AT THE LOCK. I IMPLORED THE COLONEL TO LET ME OUT, BUT THE REMORSELESS CLANKING OF THE LEVERS DROWNED MY CRIES. THE CEILING WAS ONLY A FOOT OR TWO ABOVE MY HEAD, AND WITH MY HAND UPRAISED I COULD FEEL ITS HARD, ROUGH SURFACE. THEN IT FLASHED THROUGH MY MIND THAT THE PAIN OF MY DEATH WOULD DEPEND VERY MUCH UPON THE POSITION IN WHICH I MET IT. IF I LAY ON MY FACE THE WEIGHT WOULD COME UPON MY SPINE, AND I

SHUDDERED TO THINK OF THAT DREADFUL SNAP. EASIER THE OTHER WAY, PERHAPS, AND YET HAD I THE NERVE TO LIE AND LOOK UP AT THAT DEADLY BLACK SHADOW WAVERING DOWN UPON ME? ALREADY I WAS UNABLE TO STAND ERECT, WHEN MY HEART CAUGHT SOMETHING WHICH BROUGHT A GUSH OF HOPE BACK TO MY HEART.

"I HAVE SAID THAT THOUGH FLOOR AND CEILING WERE OF IRON, THE WALLS WERE OF WOOD. AS I GAVE A LAST HURRIED GLANCE AROUND, I SAW A THIN LINE OF YELLOW LIGHT BETWEEN TWO OF THE BOARDS, WHICH BROADENED AND BROADENED AS A SMALL PANEL WAS PUSHED BACKWARDS. FOR AN INSTANT I COULD HARDLY BELIEVE THAT HERE WAS INDEED A DOOR WHICH LED AWAY FROM DEATH. THE NEXT I THREW MYSELF THROUGH AND LAY HALF-FAINTING UPON THE OTHER SIDE. THE PANEL HAD CLOSED AGAIN BEHIND ME, BUT THE CRASH OF THE LAMP, AND A FEW MOMENTS AFTERWARDS THE CLANG OF THE TWO SLABS OF METAL, TOLD ME HOW NARROW HAD BEEN MY ESCAPE.





"I WAS RECALLED TO MYSELF BY A FRANTIC PLUCKING AT MY WRIST, AND I FOUND MYSELF LYING UPON THE STONE FLOOR OF A NARROW CORRIDOR, WHILE A WOMAN BENT OVER ME AND TUGGED AT ME WITH HER LEFT HAND, WHILE SHE HELD A CANDLE IN HER RIGHT. IT WAS THE SAME GOOD FRIEND WHOSE WARNING I HAD SO FOOLISHLY REJECTED.

" 'COME! COME!' SHE CRIED, BREATHLESSLY. 'THEY WILL BE HERE IN A MOMENT. THEY WILL SEE THAT YOU ARE NOT THERE. OH, DO NOT WASTE THE SO PRECIOUS TIME, BUT COME!'

"THIS TIME, AT LEAST, I DID NOT SCORN HER ADVICE I STAGGERED TO MY FEET, AND RAN WITH HER ALONG THE CORRIDOR AND DOWN A WINDING STAIR. THE LATTER LED TO ANOTHER BROAD PASSAGE, AND, JUST AS WE REACHED IT, WE HEARD THE SOUND OF RUNNING FEET, AND THE SHOUTING OF TWO VOICES — ONE ANSWERING THE OTHER — FROM THE FLOOR BENEATH. MY GUIDE STOPPED, AND LOOKED ABOUT HER LIKE ONE WHO IS AT HER WITS' END. THEN SHE THREW OPEN A DOOR WHICH LED INTO A BEDROOM, THROUGH THE WINDOW OF WHICH THE MOON WAS SHINING BRIGHTLY.

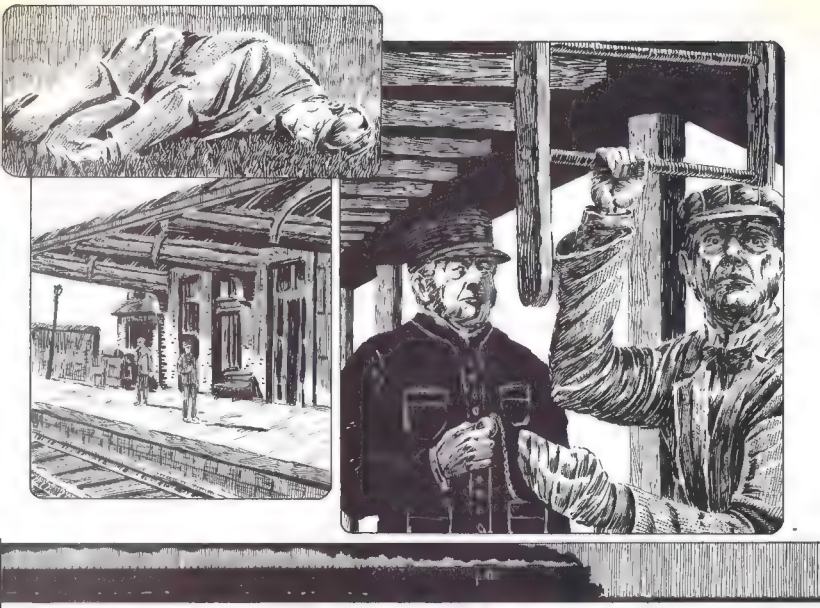
" 'IT IS YOUR ONLY CHANCE,' SAID SHE. 'IT IS HIGH, BUT IT MAY BE THAT YOU CAN JUMP IT.'

"AS SHE SPOKE A LIGHT SPRANG INTO VIEW AT THE FURTHER END OF THE PASSAGE, AND I SAW THE LEAN FIGURE OF COLONEL LYSANDER STARK RUSHING FORWARD WITH A LANTERN IN ONE HAND, AND A WEAPON LIKE A BUTCHER'S CLEAVER IN THE OTHER. I RUSHED ACROSS THE BEDROOM, FLUNG OPEN THE WINDOW, AND LOOKED OUT. HOW QUIET AND SWEET AND WHOLESOME THE GARDEN LOOKED IN THE MOONLIGHT, AND IT COULD NOT BE MORE THAN THIRTY FEET DOWN. I CLAMBERED OUT UPON THE SILL, BUT I HESITATED TO JUMP, UNTIL I SHOULD HAVE HEARD WHAT PASSED BETWEEN MY SAVIOUR AND THE RUFFIAN WHO PURSUED ME. IF SHE WERE ILL-USED, THEN AT ANY RISKS I WAS DETERMINED TO GO BACK TO HER ASSISTANCE. THE THOUGHT HAD HARDLY FLASHED THROUGH MY MIND BEFORE HE WAS AT THE DOOR, PUSHING HIS WAY PAST HER; BUT SHE THREW HER ARMS ROUND HIM, AND TRIED TO HOLD HIM BACK.

" 'FRITZ! FRITZ!' SHE CRIED IN ENGLISH, 'REMEMBER YOUR PROMISE AFTER THE LAST TIME. YOU SAID IT SHOULD NOT BE AGAIN. HE WILL BE SILENT! OH, HE WILL BE SILENT!'

" 'YOU ARE MAD, ELISE!' HE SHOUTED, STRUGGLING TO BREAK AWAY FROM HER. 'YOU WILL BE THE RUIN OF US. HE HAS SEEN TOO MUCH. LET ME PASS, I SAY!' HE DASHED HER TO ONE SIDE, AND, RUSHING TO THE WINDOW, CUT AT ME WITH HIS HEAVY WEAPON. I HAD LET MYSELF GO, AND WAS HANGING BY THE HANDS TO THE SILL, WHEN HIS BLOW FELL. I WAS CONSCIOUS OF A DULL PAIN, MY GRIP LOOSENED, AND I FELL INTO THE GARDEN BELOW.

"I WAS SHAKEN, BUT NOT HURT BY THE FALL; SO I PICKED MYSELF UP, AND RUSHED OFF AMONG THE BUSHES AS HARD AS I COULD RUN, FOR I UNDERSTOOD THAT I WAS FAR FROM BEING OUT OF DANGER YET. SUDDENLY, HOWEVER, AS I RAN, A DEADLY DIZZINESS AND SICKNESS CAME OVER ME. I GLANCED DOWN AT MY HAND, WHICH WAS THROBBING PAINFULLY, AND THEN, FOR THE FIRST TIME, SAW THAT MY THUMB HAD BEEN CUT OFF, AND THAT THE BLOOD WAS POURING FROM MY WOUND. I ENDEAVOURED TO TIE MY HANDKERCHIEF ROUND IT, BUT THERE CAME A SUDDEN BUZZING IN MY EARS, AND NEXT MOMENT I FELL IN A DEAD FAINT AMONG THE ROSE-BUSHES



"HOW LONG I REMAINED UNCONSCIOUS I CANNOT TELL. IT MUST HAVE BEEN A VERY LONG TIME, FOR THE MOON HAD SUNK, AND A BRIGHT MORNING WAS BREAKING WHEN I CAME TO MYSELF. MY CLOTHES WERE ALL SODDEN WITH DEW, AND MY COAT-SLEEVE WAS DRENCHED WITH BLOOD FROM MY WOUNDED THUMB. THE SMARTING OF IT RECALLED IN AN INSTANT ALL THE PARTICULARS OF MY NIGHT'S ADVENTURE, AND I SPRANG TO MY FEET WITH THE FEELING THAT I MIGHT HARDLY YET BE SAFE FROM MY PURSUERS. BUT, TO MY ASTONISHMENT, WHEN I CAME TO LOOK ROUND ME, NEITHER HOUSE NOR GARDEN WERE TO BE SEEN. I HAD BEEN LYING IN AN ANGLE OF THE HEDGE CLOSE BY THE HIGHROAD, AND JUST A LITTLE LOWER DOWN WAS A LONG BUILDING, WHICH PROVED, UPON MY APPROACHING IT TO BE THE VERY STATION AT WHICH I HAD ARRIVED UPON THE PREVIOUS NIGHT. WERE IT NOT FOR THE UGLY WOUND UPON MY HAND, ALL THAT HAD PASSED DURING THOSE DREADFUL HOURS MIGHT HAVE BEEN AN EVIL DREAM.

"HALF DAZED, I WENT INTO THE STATION, AND ASKED ABOUT THE MORNING TRAIN. THERE WOULD BE ONE TO READING IN LESS THAN AN HOUR. THE SAME PORTER WAS ON DUTY, I FOUND, AS HAD BEEN THERE WHEN I ARRIVED. I INQUIRED FROM HIM WHETHER HE HAD EVER HEARD OF COLONEL LYSANDER STARK. THE NAME WAS STRANGE TO HIM. HAD HE OBSERVED A CARRIAGE THE NIGHT BEFORE WAITING FOR ME? NO, HE HAD NOT. WAS THERE A POLICE STATION ANYWHERE NEAR? THERE WAS ONE ABOUT THREE MILES OFF

"IT WAS TOO FAR FOR ME TO GO, WEAK AND ILL AS I WAS. I DETERMINED TO WAIT UNTIL I GOT BACK TO TOWN BEFORE TELLING MY STORY TO THE POLICE. IT WAS A LITTLE PAST SIX WHEN I ARRIVED, SO I WENT FIRST TO HAVE MY WOUND DRESSED, AND THEN THE DOCTOR WAS KIND ENOUGH TO BRING ME ALONG HERE. I PUT THE CASE INTO YOUR HANDS AND SHALL DO EXACTLY WHAT YOU ADVISE."

WE BOTH SAT IN SILENCE FOR SOME LITTLE TIME AFTER, LISTENING TO THIS EXTRAORDINARY NARRATIVE. THEN SHERLOCK HOLMES PULLED DOWN FROM THE SHELF ONE OF THE PONDEROUS COMMONPLACE BOOKS IN WHICH HE PLACED HIS CUTTINGS.

"HERE IS AN ADVERTISEMENT WHICH WILL INTEREST YOU," SAID HE. "IT APPEARED IN ALL THE PAPERS ABOUT A YEAR AGO. LISTEN TO THIS: — 'LOST, ON THE 9TH INST., MR. JEREMIAH HAYLING, AGED 26, A HYDRAULIC ENGINEER, LEFT HIS LODGINGS AT TEN O'CLOCK AT NIGHT, AND HAS NOT BEEN HEARD OF SINCE. WAS DRESSED IN,' &C., &C. HA! THAT REPRESENTS THE LAST TIME THAT THE COLONEL NEEDED TO HAVE HIS MACHINE OVERHAULED, I FANCY."

"GOOD HEAVENS!" CRIED MY PATIENT. "THEN THAT EXPLAINS WHAT THE GIRL SAID."

"UNDOUBTEDLY. IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT THE COLONEL WAS A COOL AND DESPERATE MAN, WHO WAS ABSOLUTELY DETERMINED THAT NOTHING SHOULD STAND IN THE WAY OF HIS LITTLE GAME, LIKE THOSE OUT-AND-OUT PIRATES WHO WILL LEAVE NO SURVIVOR FROM A CAPTURED SHIP. WELL, EVERY MOMENT NOW IS PRECIOUS, SO, IF YOU FEEL EQUAL TO IT, WE SHALL GO DOWN TO SCOTLAND YARD AT ONCE AS A PRELIMINARY TO STARTING FOR EYFORD."

SOME THREE HOURS OR SO AFTERWARDS WE WERE ALL IN THE TRAIN TOGETHER, BOUND FROM READING TO THE LITTLE BERKSHIRE VILLAGE. THERE WERE SHERLOCK HOLMES, THE HYDRAULIC ENGINEER, INSPECTOR BRADSTREET OF SCOTLAND-YARD, A PLAIN-CLOTHES MAN, AND MYSELF. BRADSTREET HAD SPREAD AN ORDNANCE MAP UP THE COUNTY OUT UPON THE SEAT, AND WAS BUSY WITH HIS COMPASSES DRAWING A CIRCLE WITH EYFORD FOR ITS CENTRE.

"THERE YOU ARE," SAID HE. "THAT CIRCLE IS DRAWN AT A RADIUS OF TEN MILES FROM THE VILLAGE. THE PLACE WE WANT MUST BE SOMEWHERE NEAR THAT LINE. YOU SAID TEN MILES, I THINK, SIR?"

"IT WAS AN HOUR'S GOOD DRIVE."

"AND YOU THINK THAT THEY BROUGHT YOU BACK ALL THAT WAY WHEN YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS?"

"THEY MUST HAVE DONE SO. I HAVE A CONFUSED MEMORY, TOO, OF HAVING BEEN LIFTED AND CONVEYED SOMEWHERE."

"WHAT I CANNOT UNDERSTAND," SAID I, "IS WHY THEY SHOULD HAVE SPARED YOU WHEN THEY FOUND YOU LYING FAINTING IN THE GARDEN. PERHAPS THE VILLAIN WAS SOFTENED BY THE WOMAN'S ENTREATIES."

"I HARDLY THINK THAT LIKELY. I NEVER SAW A MORE INEXORABLE FACE IN MY LIFE."

"OH, WE SHALL SOON CLEAR UP ALL THAT," SAID BRADSTREET. "WELL, I HAVE DRAWN MY CIRCLE, AND I ONLY WISH I KNEW AT WHAT POINT UPON IT THE FOLK THAT WE ARE IN SEARCH OF ARE TO BE FOUND."

"I THINK I COULD LAY MY FINGER ON IT," SAID HOLMES, QUIETLY.

"REALLY, NOW!" CRIED THE INSPECTOR, "YOU HAVE FORMED YOUR OPINION! COME NOW, WE SHALL SEE WHO AGREES WITH YOU. I SAY IT IS SOUTH, FOR THE COUNTRY IS MORE DESERTED THERE."

"AND I SAY EAST," SAID MY PATIENT.

"I AM FOR WEST," REMARKED THE PLAIN-CLOTHES MAN. "THERE ARE SEVERAL QUIET LITTLE VILLAGES UP THERE."

"AND I AM FOR NORTH," SAID I; "BECAUSE THERE ARE NO HILLS THERE, AND OUR FRIEND SAYS THAT HE DID NOT NOTICE THE CARRIAGE GO UP ANY."

"COME," CRIED THE INSPECTOR, LAUGHING; "IT'S A VERY PRETTY DIVERSITY OF OPINION. WE HAVE BOXED THE COMPASS AMONG US. WHO DO YOU GIVE YOUR CASTING VOTE TO?"

"YOU ARE ALL WRONG."

"BUT WE CAN'T *ALL* BE."

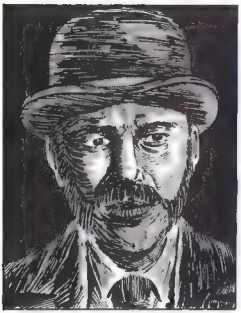
"OH YES, YOU CAN. THIS IS MY POINT." HE PLACED HIS FINGER IN THE CENTRE OF THE CIRCLE. "THIS IS WHERE WE SHALL FIND THEM."

"BUT THE TWELVE-MILE DRIVE?" GASPED HATHERLEY.

"SIX OUT AND SIX BACK. NOTHING SIMPLER. YOU SAY YOURSELF THAT THE HORSE WAS FRESH AND GLOSSY WHEN YOU GOT IN. HOW COULD IT BE THAT, IF IT HAD GONE TWELVE MILES OVER HEAVY ROADS?"

"INDEED IT IS A LIKELY RUSE ENOUGH," OBSERVED BRADSTREET, THOUGHFULLY. "OF COURSE THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT AS TO THE NATURE OF THIS GANG."

"NONE AT ALL," SAID HOLMES. "THEY ARE COINERS ON A LARGE SCALE, AND HAVE USED THE MACHINE TO FORM THE AMALGAM WHICH HAS TAKEN THE PLACE OF SILVER."



"WE HAVE KNOWN FOR SOME TIME THAT A CLEVER GANG WAS AT WORK," SAID THE INSPECTOR. "THEY HAVE BEEN TURNING OUT HALF-CROWNS BY THE THOUSAND. WE EVEN TRACED THEM AS FAR AS READING, BUT COULD GET NO FURTHER; FOR THEY HAD COVERED THEIR TRACES IN A WAY THAT SHOWED THAT THEY WERE VERY OLD HANDS. BUT NOW, THANKS TO THIS LUCKY CHANCE, I THINK THAT WE HAVE GOT THEM RIGHT ENOUGH.

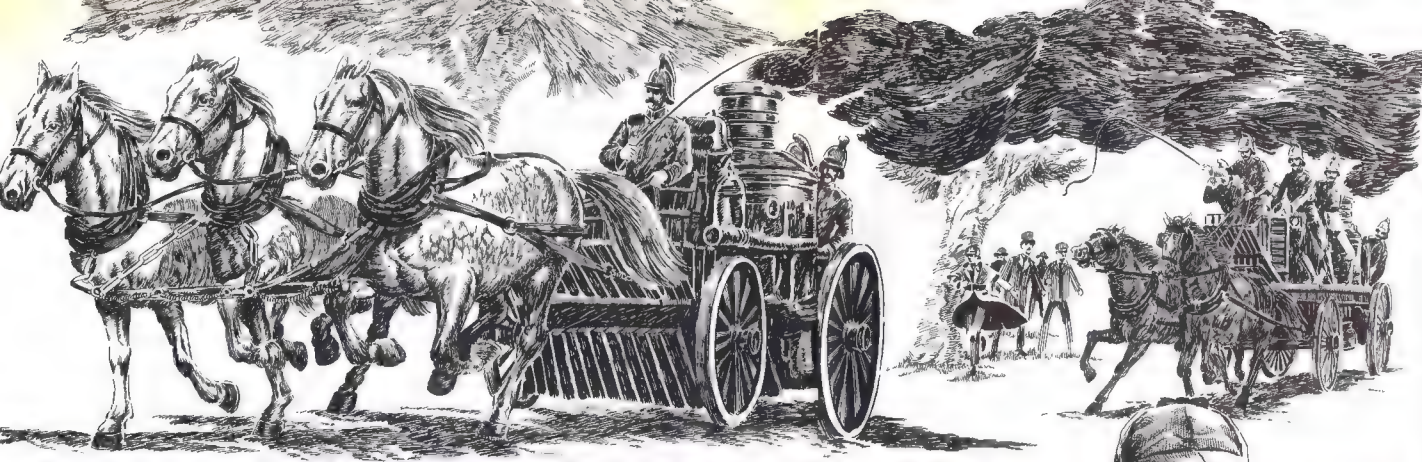
BUT THE INSPECTOR WAS MISTAKEN FOR THOSE CRIMINALS WERE NOT DESTINED TO FALL INTO THE HANDS OF JUSTICE. AS WE ROLLED INTO EYFORD STATION WE SAW A GIGANTIC COLUMN OF SMOKE WHICH STREAMED UP FROM BEHIND A SMALL CLUMP OF TREES IN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD, AND HUNG LIKE AN IMMENSE OSTRICH FEATHER OVER THE LANDSCAPE.

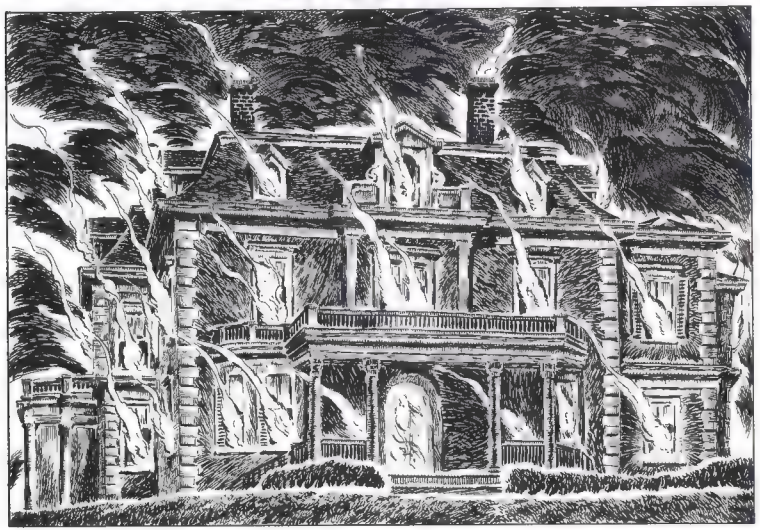
"A HOUSE ON FIRE?" ASKED BRADSTREET, AS THE TRAIN STEAMED OFF AGAIN ON ITS WAY.

"YES, SIR!" SAID THE STATION-MASTER.

"WHEN DID IT BREAK OUT?"

"I HEAR THAT IT WAS DURING THE NIGHT, SIR, BUT HAS GOT WORSE, AND THE WHOLE PLACE IS IN A BLAZE."





"WHOSE HOUSE IS IT?"

"DR. BECHER'S."

"TELL ME," BROKE IN THE ENGINEER, "IS DR. BECHER A GERMAN, VERY THIN, WITH A LONG SHARP NOSE?"

THE STATION-MASTER LAUGHED HEARTILY. "NO, SIR, DR. BECHER IS AN ENGLISHMAN, AND THERE ISN'T A MAN IN THE PARISH WHO HAS A BETTER-LINED WAISTCOAT. BUT HE HAS A GENTLEMAN STAYING WITH HIM, A PATIENT, AS I UNDERSTAND, WHO IS A FOREIGNER, AND HE LOOKS AS IF A LITTLE GOOD BERKSHIRE BEEF WOULD DO HIM NO HARM."

THE STATION-MASTER HAD NOT FINISHED HIS SPEECH BEFORE WE WERE ALL HASTENING IN THE DIRECTION OF THE FIRE. THE ROAD TOPPED A LOW HILL, AND THERE WAS A GREAT WIDESPREAD WHITE-WASHED BUILDING IN FRONT OF US. SPOUTING FIRE AT EVERY CHINK AND WINDOW, WHILE IN THE GARDEN IN FRONT THREE FIRE-ENGINES WERE VAINLY STRIVING TO KEEP THE FLAMES UNDER

"THAT'S IT!" CRIED HATHERLEY, IN INTENSE EXCITEMENT. "THERE IS THE GRAVEL DRIVE, AND THERE ARE THE ROSE-BUSHES WHERE I LAY. THAT SECOND WINDOW IS THE ONE THAT I JUMPED FROM."

"WELL, AT LEAST," SAID HOLMES, "YOU HAVE HAD YOUR REVENGE UPON THEM THERE CAN BE NO QUESTION THAT IT WAS YOUR OIL LAMP WHICH, WHEN IT WAS CRUSHED IN THE PROCESS, SET FIRE TO THE WOODEN WALLS, THOUGH NO DOUBT THEY WERE TOO EXCITED IN THE CHASE AFTER YOU TO OBSERVE IT AT THE TIME. NOW KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN IN THIS CROWD FOR YOUR FRIENDS OF LAST NIGHT, THOUGH I VERY MUCH FEAR THAT THEY ARE A GOOD HUNDRED MILES OFF BY NOW."

AND HOLMES' FEARS CAME TO BE REALISED, FOR FROM THAT DAY TO THIS NO WORD HAS EVER BEEN HEARD EITHER OF THE BEAUTIFUL WOMAN, THE SINISTER GERMAN, OR THE MOROSE ENGLISHMAN. EARLY THAT MORNING A PEASANT HAD MET A CART CONTAINING SEVERAL PEOPLE AND SOME VERY BULKY BOXES DRIVING RAPIDLY IN THE DIRECTION OF READING, BUT THERE ALL TRACES OF THE FUGITIVES DISAPPEARED. AND EVEN HOMES' INGENUITY FAILED EVER TO DISCOVER THE LEAST CLUE AS TO THEIR WHEREABOUTS

THE FIREMEN HAD BEEN MUCH PERTURBED AT THE STRANGE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH THEY HAD FOUND WITHIN, AND STILL MORE SO BY DISCOVERING A NEWLY SEVERED HUMAN THUMB UPON A WINDOW-SILL OF THE SECOND FLOOR. ABOUT SUNSET, HOWEVER, THEIR EFFORTS WERE AT LAST SUCCESSFUL, AND THEY SUBDUED THE FLAMES, BUT NOT BEFORE THE ROOF HAD FALLEN IN, AND THE WHOLE PLACE BEEN REDUCED TO SUCH ABSOLUTE RUIN THAT, SAVE SOME TWISTED CYLINDERS AND IRON PIPING, NOT A TRACE REMAINED OF THE MACHINERY WHICH HAD COST SO DEARLY. LARGE MASSES OF NICKEL AND OF TIN WERE DISCOVERED STORED IN AN OUTHOUSE, BUT NO COINS WERE TO BE FOUND, WHICH MAY HAVE EXPLAINED THE PRESENCE OF THOSE BULKY BOXES WHICH HAVE BEEN ALREADY REFERRED TO.

HOW OUR HYDRAULIC ENGINEER HAD BEEN CONVEYED FROM THE GARDEN TO THE SPOT WHERE HE RECOVERED HIS SENSES MIGHT HAVE REMAINED FOR EVER A MYSTERY WERE IT NOT FOR THE SOFT MOULD, WHICH TOLD US A VERY PLAIN TALE. HE HAD EVIDENTLY BEEN CARRIED DOWN BY TWO PERSONS, ONE OF WHOM HAD REMARKABLY SMALL FEET AND THE OTHER UNUSUALLY LARGE ONES. ON THE WHOLE, IT WAS MOST PROBABLY THAT THE SILENT ENGLISHMAN, BEING LESS BOLD OR LESS MURDEROUS THAN HIS COMPANION, HAD ASSISTED THE WOMAN TO BEAR THE UNCONSCIOUS MAN OUT OF THE WAY OF DANGER.

"WELL," SAID OUR ENGINEER RUEFULLY, AS WE TOOK OUR SEATS TO RETURN ONCE MORE TO LONDON, "IT HAS BEEN A PRETTY BUSINESS FOR ME! I HAVE LOST MY THUMB, AND I HAVE LOST A FIFTY-GUINEA FEE. AND WHAT HAVE I GAINED?"

"EXPERIENCE," SAID HOLMES LAUGHING. "INDIRECTLY IT MAY BE OF VALUE, YOU KNOW; YOU HAVE ONLY TO PUT IT INTO WORDS TO GAIN THE REPUTATION OF BEING EXCELLENT COMPANY FOR THE REMAINDER OF YOUR EXISTENCE."

The BLACKMAIL

R.R.#1
Lansdowne, Ontario
CANADA K0E 1L0

LETTER PAGE TITLE COURTESY OF KEITH A HOPE

Dear Dan,

Dan, I picked up your "Sherlock Holmes" this week and greatly enjoyed the art. You really gave it that Victorian feel, which is dear to my heart as I spent most of my teens avidly reading the Holmes books, Dickens, the Brontës -anything Victorian I could get my hands on. 'Renegade' is putting out some interesting things these days. In fact, there are a lot of different sorts of comics coming out, things that aren't the regular coloured superhero fare. I read in the press about shrinking markets and declining sales, but I see more than ever before!

Mrs. Elizabeth Holden
380 Frank Street #4
Ottawa, Ontario
K2P 0Y1

Dear Dan and Deni,

I've read all of Holmes already but it's been several years since I did and the stories are such that even if you know the plot it is always enjoyable to go through it again. I imagine that's what makes them "classics." Your format and the artwork are excellent and add to the excellence of an already great work. I hope you can do the complete works.

Sincerely,
Robert F. Konior
139 Christian Ave.
Stony Brook, NY
USA, 11790

To do the complete works would take years, maybe decades... A project of epic proportions. I love it.

Dear Mrs. Loubert:

As soon as issue one of **Cases of Sherlock Holmes** appeared at our local comic book store, I forwarded a copy to my good friend Sherlock Homes, who lives in retirement near Beachy Head, England. Holmes evidently read this first issue immediately, for he sent me his comments by return mail. I thought you might like to see his letter, which I enclose.

Sincerely,
Edward S. Lauterbach
Professor
700 N Chauncey
W. Lafayette, IN 47906

My Dear Lauterbach,

Thank you for sending me a copy of **Cases of Sherlocck Holmes.** As you know so well, I have been blessed with longevity and though I am well over one hundred years old, I am still active, nurturing my trees here in Sussex, reading, and often taking walks on the chalk cliffs at Beachy Head. The view of the sea and the shingle beach bilon is magnificent.

I read the first issue of **Cases** with interest and enjoyment. I remember very well the events concerning the beryl coronet. Though it is obvious that Mr. Day used the images of myself and my dear friend Watson as portrayed by the cinema by Mr Basil Rathbone and Mr Nigel Bruce, his black and white drawings capture nicely the atmosphere of these long ago days in London. I have only one correction to make. Mr. Day depicts the beryl coronet as a large necklace or a jeweled chain. Though a coronet may be a fillet or wreath for the head, even a decorative band worn by women around their brows, the actual beryl coronet was in the shape of a small crown of the most exquisite workmanship, much different from the heavy necklace-like chain drawn by Mr. Day. As you may recall the beryl coronet was badly mutilated. Watson, in his narrative, described how a corner with three jewels was broken off and the band was badly twisted. Aside from this detail, I thoroughly enjoyed Mr. Day's retelling of my adventures in the never-to-be-forgotten days under Queen Victoria. But perhaps these are the ramblings of an old man, stirred once again by the artistry of Mr. Day....

Thank you again for sending me this jeu d'esperit. It has brought back many pleasant thoughts of those exciting times when Dr. Watson and I were so busily engaged in tracking down the malifactors of gaslit London.

Faithfully yours,
Sherlock Holmes

Dear Mr. Sherlock Holmes, Dr. Watson, Editors;

I know I'm no expert on Sherlock or comics but I think you have done a fairly good job of combining the two. Dan Day's art is excellent as it gives the impression of mystique that is essential to Sherlock. The thing I didn't like was the placement of the text. I know it would be dumb to have every page designed the same but it would be easier to have it this way than to have the reader jump around on the page, like on page 4 of issue#1. You could also try to get pages of text to end at the end of a paragraph instead of mid-sentence. This would give a better sense of flow to the story. Overall I really enjoyed the book, especially Dan's portrayal of the people who are the soul in every Sherlock mystery. Keep up the good work and good luck.

A recent fan,
Gary H. Pon
P.O. Box 472
Turtleford, Sask.
S0M 2Y0

Dear Dan and Dave,

How are you guys doing? Having fun; I hope so. I have three reasons why I'm writing this letter to you guys. One reason is because of your contest which first inspired me to write this letter. I'd be overjoyed to have won, but I won't be crushed if I lose. I hope you don't mind me sending in more than one entry. I'm trying to save on postage.

This brings me to my second reason, which is I've dedicated my life to many causes and one of them is to try to beat "T.M." Maple. Who's "T.M." Maple you ask? Who really knows!? His name is a mystery, so is his age, and income. One thing's for sure, he loves to write super long letters that boggle the mind. Also every comic I read, besides your fabulous one, has had a letter from "T.M." Maple. You can tell if it's his letter if it's a) really infinitely long, b) if it talks about the comic in super-minute detail, c) and if his special "T.M. Maple name is signed to the letter. So I'm going to try to beat "T.M." Maple's outstanding record on writing the longest, mind-expanding, special signatured letters. I'm also going to try to beat his number of letters he has sent to all other comics.

And at last this brings me to the third reason which is because of your comic. It's très bien, very good, outstanding, excellent scripting, and terrific artwork, too. And now that you are flattered, how about printing my letter in your new letter column. Please! This would be my first letter to any comic. You guys should be proud that I chose you.

Sincerely
Victor M. Lau (alias Virgil)
110 Dale Cres. Regina, Sask.
S4N 5J7

There! Your letter to the BLACKMAIL beat out T.M. Maple's, and I'm glad you enjoy "Cases of Sherlock Holmes." T.M. Maple, where are you?

Gentlemen,

I am writing you this letter to thank you personally for providing me with the exquisite entertainment of your "Cases of Sherlock Holmes" magazine. As an artist myself I truly appreciate a well executed project such as this. I have issues#1 and#2 and am looking forward to many more. The cover artwork as well as the bold black and white illustrations, and fantastic treatment of the storyline totally blew me away. My best to Dan and David Day and crew. Keep up the good work. It is nice to know that at least some people still see the educational opportunities of the comic format. Keep up the good work

Your by-now-rabid fan,
Jim Bob Whiteside
239 E. Bayview Blvd. Apt. #3
Norfolk, Virginia 23505

David and I both thank you for your compliments.

Join us for some horror in Shadows From the Grave **When David introduces his pencil work, coming in March.**

COMING MARCH • 1987 #1 OF TWO ISSUES

ORIGINAL ARTWORK FOR SALE!

COVERS (Black & White)

AZTEC ACE 8
AZTEC ACE 10
AZTEC ACE 12
AZTEC ACE 13
AZTEC ACE ADDS - Bridget in Clock

STARK FUTURE 1 (Colour)

VIGILANTE 24
VIGILANTE 25
VIGILANTE ANNUAL 1

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INTERIOR PAGES

AZTEC ACE 3. Pages 2, 22, 25
AZTEC ACE 4: Pages 16, 17, 22
AZTEC ACE 5: Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 12, 14, 15, 25
AZTEC ACE 6: Pages 2, 3, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
AZTEC ACE 7: Pages 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26
AZTEC ACE 8: Pages 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 16, 18, 19.
AZTEC ACE 10: Pages 4, 5, 8, 9, 11, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24
AZTEC ACE 11. Pages 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27
AZTEC ACE 12. Pages 1, 6, 7, 8, 19, 20, 23, 24
AZTEC ACE 13: Pages 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 24, 25
AZTEC ACE 15: Pages 2, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 15, 21, 23, 24, 25, 26
BATMAN AND THE OUTSIDERS 13 Pages 11, 13, 14, 16
SWAMPTHING 20 Pages 6, 7, 13
CEREBUS 64 Pages 22, 23, 25
CEREBUS 65: Pages 22, 23, 24
EPIC 32. Pages 87, 88, 89, 90
EPIC 33: Pages 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90
VORTEX 6: Pages 32, 33, 34
VORTEX 9 Pages 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
BLACK ZEPPELIN 1: Pages 13, 14, 15, 16
BLACK ZEPPELIN 2: Pages 3, 4, 5, 6, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23
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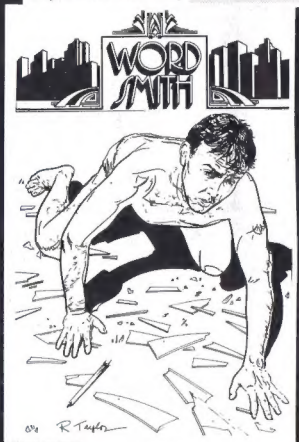
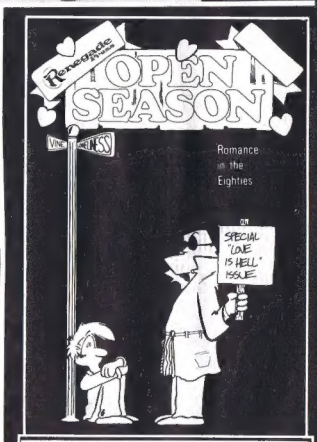
SHIPPING FEB. 13th

MS. TREE 37
Written by Max Alan Collins
Art by Terry Beatty

The suspense continues and violence ensues as the graphic novel "Like Father" continues. Ms. Tree searches for her father's killer while desperately attempting to clear the charges that he died a crooked cop!



WORDSMITH 8
Written by Dave Darrigo
Art by Rick Taylor
(Title this "ROMANCE and REAL PEOPLE" before going in to the synopsis).
Pulpwriter, Clay Washburn's tortured love affair appears to be ending. Clay, as usual, tries to "write" himself out of his real-life problems. In this issue, he uses his private investigator hero, Brass Knuckles Bendix, to vent out his romantic frustrations.



OPEN SEASON 3
Written and drawn by Jim Bricker
The big "Romance in the '80's" issues as Robin and her fiancee, Rob, have it out over dinner. Meanwhile, Joe and Cliff discuss the fairer sex over far too many beers. This is not your typical romance/love story.
"Reagan Dreams" winds up with our incumbent taking on the Japanese Auto Industry as "Reagun".

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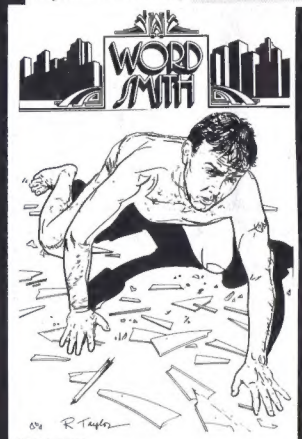

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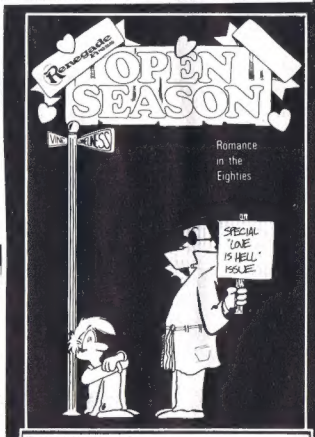

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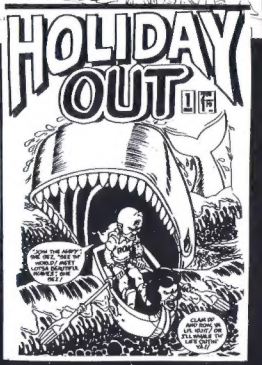
CASES OF SHERLOCK HOMES 6
Story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Art and adaptation by Dan Day
Cover by Dan Day and David Day
A recent chain of events forces a gentleman to seek out Sherlock Holmes' advice. However, the gentleman refuses to supply any information, so Holmes must drop the case. What occurs next is so horrifying that Holmes is again called in to discover the secret behind "The Resident Patient"

SHIPPING FEB. 27th

STRATA
Written by Joe Judt
Art by Ray Murtaugh and Jim Brozman

Back on Earth, Flambeau is accused of being a Russian spy, accused of murdering a publishing executive, and then he wonders why his wife wants to leave him!

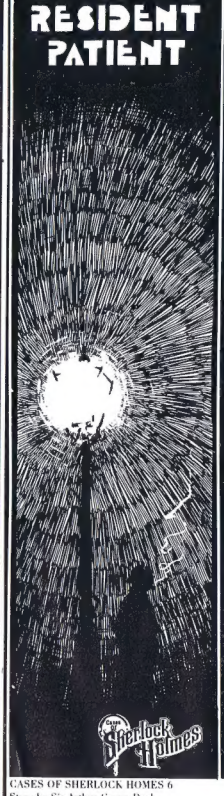
ETERNITY SMITH 5
Written by Dennis Mallonee
Art by Rick Hoberg
"MIND WARS!"
Eternity Smith is caught in the ultimate trap: with no hope of escape, he must battle his own wife to the death . . . and beyond! Also--the mystery of Tesseract revealed!



HOLIDAY OUT 2
Cover by Wayne Truman
Back cover by Duane Hanson

STIFFARM: THE MOVIE with art by Wayne Truman and story by Michael Vance. Ned is thrown INTO "Stiffarm: The Movie" by an angry NUM, the magic 'cat'. GUIDED MISSIVES will feature letters from Holiday Out fans and foes. INTERVIEW with Holiday Out artist Wayne Truman. Part II: conclusion. IN THE OUT DOOR: Horror story with art by Stan Timmons and Charles T. Smith and story by Michael Vance. We take another look at Light's End, Maine!! HOLIDAY OUT newspaper strips featuring NUM NUM and POTO with art by Wayne Truman and story by Michael Vance.

SHIPPING FEB. 27th



CASES OF SHERLOCK HOMES 6
Story by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
Art and adaptation by Dan Day
Cover by Dan Day and David Day
A recent chain of events forces a gentleman to seek out Sherlock Holmes' advice. However, the gentleman refuses to supply any information, so Holmes must drop the case. What occurs next is so horrifying that Holmes is again called in to discover the secret behind "The Resident Patient"

STRATA
Written by Joe Judt
Art by Ray Murtaugh and Jim Brozman

Back on Earth, Flambeau is accused of being a Russian spy, accused of murdering a publishing executive, and then he wonders why his wife wants to leave him!

ETERNITY SMITH 5
Written by Dennis Mallonee
Art by Rick Hoberg
"MIND WARS!"
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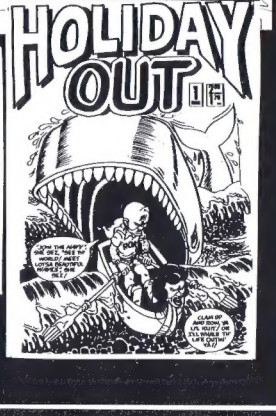

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